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MISTAKES IN RELIGION EXPOSED:

IN AN

ESSAY

ON THE

PROPHECY

OF

ZACHARIAS.

By H. VENN, M. A.
Chaplain to the Earl of BUCHAN,
AND
Rector of *Yilling*, *Huntingdonſhire*.

ISAIAH XXVIII. 15.

We have made LIES our refuge, and under FALSHOOD have we hid ourſelves.

Nec extra conſcientiam bonam charitas; nec extra fidem conſcientia bona; nec fides extra verbum Dei. Hæc qui diſſolvit, a ſcopo aberrat, & pro veritate, vanitatem amplectitur.

BEZA.

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INTRO-

INTRODUCTION.

MISTAKES in Religion, paſs with many for matters of ſmall importance, becauſe they are ſuppoſed to have little or no connection with our preſent or future happineſs.

The following pages directly oppoſe this tenet, now become extremely popular, by a winning appearance of candor and free enquiry, which its patrons never fail to plead in favour of it.

To expoſe, therefore, the favorite conceit, "that men are in no danger of deſtruction from embracing falſe doctrine," is become needful, and will ſerve as a proper Introduction to this Eſſay.

Were the conceit then true, that Miſtakes in Religion are matters of ſmall importance, it muſt be true alſo, that a well-informed judgment would be of no more value towards obtaining acceptance with God, than one blinded by the ſpirit of error. Good principles and bad muſt no longer influence the mind according to their nature, and therefore ſhould loſe their names. Ignorance would ſtand upon a level with knowledge, and falſe conceptions of God, with thoſe which are juſt: for no preference can be due to one above the other, if the practical influence of both be the ſame.

More glaring abſurdities than theſe are, cannot be named. The notion, therefore, from which they neceſſarily follow, muſt itſelf be falſe.

But the miſchief this libertine opinion does, equals its abſurdity. What can pour contempt on *all Religion* more, than to ſuppoſe miſtakes about it are of no conſequence?

conſequence? Will any man ſtudy to know the mind of GOD, after he is perſuaded ignorance in that reſpect has no hurtful tendency? or value the Bible, when the truths contained in it, inſtead of being accounted principles of life and action, are degraded into ſpeculative points, which we may neglect without guilt, and deny without loſs or danger to the ſoul? Or what power of commanding faith in the doctrines He hath revealed, can be ſaid to remain with GOD, when authority over conſcience is ſuppoſed entirely to reſt on every man's own apprehenſion of truth, not on his written word?

A conceit ſo pernicious, we may be ſure muſt contradict the judgment and practice of CHRIST and his Apoſtles. Accordingly we find, they are abſolute in requiring men to receive the truths they taught, as neceſſary to ſalvation. "Except ye believe that I am He, ye ſhall "die in your ſins," ſaith our LORD.

" Preach the Goſpel to every creature. " He that believeth and is baptized, ſhall " be ſaved: He that believeth *not*, ſhall " be damned." The practice of the Apoſtles was founded upon this deciſive tone of their divine Maſter. Hence, when certain teachers at *Philippi* deviated from the faith, St *Paul* calls them *dogs*, to excite univerſal deteſtation of their errors, and charges the church to beware of them. He commands the churches of *Galatia* to look upon thoſe as *accurſed*, who preached any other Goſpel to them, than that they had heard from his mouth. And he places hereſies in the ſame dreadful predicament with adultery, as a work of the fleſh. St *Peter*, perfectly harmonizing with his brother Apoſtle, expreſſes himſelf in as ſtrong terms on this head. " There ſhall be falſe teachers," he ſays, " among you, who privily ſhall bring in " damnable hereſies, denying the LORD " that bought them, and bring upon " themſelves ſwift deſtruction."

St

St *John* commands the faithful, not to receive into their houſes any teacher who ſhould bring with him any other doctrine, than he had taught them himſelf; charging them, "not to bid ſuch a one "GOD ſpeed; leſt by ſo doing, they ſhould "become partakers," not of *his ſpeculative miſtakes*, but "of his evil deeds."

It is evident from theſe paſſages, (a few of many which might be alledged) that CHRIST and his Apoſtles were extremely jealous to preſerve the doctrine they taught uncorrupted, as a matter of the laſt importance. No art can reconcile their declarations, warnings, and commands, to the conceit, that Miſtakes in Religion have little connexion with our preſent or future happineſs. Nor is it poſſible to reverence their judgment and practice as an infallible precedent, unleſs we regard theſe declarations, warnings and commands, as deciſive, that falſe doctrine is poiſon to the ſoul, and to be found

in the faith, neceſſary to acceptance with our Maker.

The authority and practice, therefore, of CHRIST and his Apoſtles, will juſtify every well-meant attempt to prove the malignant nature of Miſtakes in Religion.

Every one expoſed in this Work, is fairly deducible, I apprehend, from the Prophecy of *Zacharias:* a part of ſcripture highly deſerving peculiar attention; becauſe it certainly contains that very ſyſtem of divinity, which the Baptiſt, from his tendereſt years, was taught to believe: for it is againſt all reaſon to ſuppoſe the father would ever inſtil any other doctrine into the mind of his child, than what he publiſhed to the people himſelf, when full of the holy Ghoſt.

This Prophecy I call a *Syſtem* of Divinity, becauſe it contains ſeveral articles of religion, which, like the foundation and ſuperſtructure, bear to each other the

the neareſt relation, and muſt ſtand or fall together.

Zacharias, for inſtance, teaches, that we are all in the hands of our enemies, and thoſe that hate us. Hence our ruin muſt be certain, unleſs ſome Deliverer, more mighty than our foes, undertake our reſcue. In the words of the Prophecy, the Horn of Salvation raiſed up to viſit and redeem us, muſt be the LORD Himſelf. And when our guilt and our pollutions are ſo great, what can inſpire men, intimidated on this account, with full confidence in the Horn of Salvation? Nothing leſs than the Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, that ſuch truſt ſhall be crowned with final conqueſt over every foe; or, in the words of *Zacharias*, that "the people of GOD being delivered out "of the hands of their enemies, ſhall "ſerve Him without fear, in holineſs "and righteouſneſs before Him all the "days of their life."

Further; It follows from hence, that this plan of salvation provided for fallen man, and displaying every perfection of GOD in the highest degree, well deserves to be the principal subject of all prophecy, as the knowledge of it is the appointed means of promoting holiness and peace amongst men in every age. *Zacharias* expressly affirms these several truths, which stand inseparably connected together. So that without any force of interpretation, or human comment, we find the chief articles of the Christian faith in these dictates of the holy Ghost published by the Baptist's father.

Several religious mistakes, besides those exposed in this Essay, might have been justly deduced, I am very sensible, from this distinguished part of scripture. But those selected, had the preference, from long observation of their bad effects, in the course of more than twenty years attendance on the business of my profession, first in *London*, and its near neighbourhood, afterwards

afterwards in the large and very populous Pariſh of *Huddersfield.*

Regular practitioners in the medical art are allowed to have knowledge in the nature and cure of bodily diſeaſes, from ſeeing much of both. Can it be juſt to deny to ſpiritual phyſicians the ſame advantage reſpecting diſeaſes of the ſoul, when their appointment is only to ſtudy its welfare? Strange indeed! if much thought, joined to much converſation on the grand ſubject of Religion, with young and old, rich and poor, ignorant and learned, devout and profane, ſhould not give ſufficient opportunity of diſcovering with certainty what are the principal miſtakes which defeat the end of our inſtructions!

Much intercourſe in this way, muſt teach all who are deſirous of knowing, what miſtakes ſome fall into by being wiſe in their own eyes; what ſooth others of licentious life into a fatal ſecurity;—

what

what fill Youthful minds with prejudice even againſt the Prince of peace; Moraliſts with contempt of Him; Formaliſts with obſtinate confidence in their blind devotions, and Antinomians with the moſt deteſtable preſumption.

To create a ſalutary dread of ſuch pernicious errors, is the deſign of this Work. And *very few* miſtakes ſtand here expoſed, but ſuch as all earneſt Chriſtians, who aſcribe their whole ſalvation to the Grace of God, and the redemption that is in Jesus, will agree are pernicious; yet I never met with a treatiſe containing a formal confutation of them.

Should any perſon of religious ſentiments directly oppoſite to thoſe maintained in this Eſſay, think it worth his while to remark from the preſs, on what he may call my own groſs prejudices, it is proper he ſhould know, that I ſhall gladly retract any miſtake I may have fallen into, with due gratitude to my corrector,

corrector, but intend no reply in vindication of my principles: because if a book cannot defend itself to the Public, it will be in vain for the author to attempt doing it. Besides, how very rare is a controversy in which either respondent or opponent keep from impertinent observations, disdainful irony, mean prevarication, and even personal abuse? So that nothing can be more disgusting to those who love peace, or more hurtful to the cause of CHRIST, than disputes in divinity, as they are managed, almost on every occasion.

The Reader of these pages, it is presumed, will not find them written in the spirit of controversy: their sole design being to prove the baneful influence of notions contrary to the doctrine believed by the universal church in every age. This indeed is often done with some warmth against the mistake, not the person whom it deceives. And those who are ready to take offence at *such* warmth,

warmth, ſeem to forget, that *men* and their *principles* are very different things, which ought by no means to be confounded together. Every ſentiment of compaſſion and love is due to their perſons, who even "trample under foot the "blood of the Son of GOD," but deteſtation is no leſs due to their errors. Were there no power of thus ſeparating abhorrence of fatal miſtakes, from ill-will towards thoſe who hold them, then the beſt Chriſtians muſt be deemed moſt uncharitable, at the inſtant they prayed for their murderers with all the ardor a tender mother would aſk the life of her child. Since at that very inſtant, the martyrs declared in the moſt affecting manner, that the miſtakes of their perſecutors were abſolutely fatal; becauſe they ſuffered death itſelf, ſooner than give the leaſt countenance to them.

Indeed love to GOD and man require, that errors of a pernicious nature, ſhould be expoſed always with warmth both from

from the pulpit and preſs; for the more earneſtly concluſive arguments are urged, the more deeply will the cauſe we plead be impreſſed. Another objection may be made to this, with all works of a ſerious nature: It may be ſaid to give a melancholy picture of the ſtate of mankind, who are living in general under the power of fatal miſtakes. But has not the general ſtate of mankind, in every age, been a moſt afflicting conſideration to every thoughtful and benevolent Chriſtian? Can you believe "there is a GOD who "judgeth in the earth, who is of purer "eyes than to behold iniquity;" or that they only "who *have done good* ſhall come "forth to the reſurrection of life," and ſee the general ſtate of mankind in a pleaſing light? Next to their own offences and depravity, nothing has ever ſo much imbittered this world to the greateſt lovers of the human ſpecies, as ſeeing the headlong purſuits in which the multitude are ſeeking death, eternal death! What

What ſighs, what tears in ſecret before GOD, have they not, after the example of CHRIST, poured out, becauſe men are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteouſneſs! What fervent interceſſions have they not offered up in their behalf, who have reproached them at the ſame time for their uncharitableneſs! What hard and long ſtruggles have they gone through, before they could ceaſe from quarrelling with the determinations of infinite wiſdom, out of love to their periſhing fellow-creatures! How would they wiſh, were it lawful, which they know it is not, that every individual, whatever he has been or done here, might eſcape the wrath to come. On the contrary, the purity of GOD, the honor of his law, the end of his government, the truth of his word, the intereſt of his upright creatures for ever exclude all hope of happineſs from them "who love darkneſs rather than light;" and, in the language of *Iſaiah*, "hold faſt a lie in their right "hand." And in this caſe, what does

good-will

good-will to men, or faithfulneſs to GOD demand from us? Surely not inſinuations of impunity to the unbelieving and diſobedient. No, but to alarm them, if poſſible, by proving, that neither numbers, nor faſhion, nor preſumption, can deſtroy the eternal connection there is in the nature of things between unbelief and miſery, hell and incorrigible wickedneſs. In no other way, can effectual oppoſition to wide-ſpread immorality and error be made; becauſe the greater neceſſity there is from the prevalence of both to inſiſt on their *final iſſue*, doubtleſs, the more melancholy muſt the general condition of mankind appear.

Is nothing to be feared beyond the grave, let men think, ſpeak, and act as they pleaſe? No longer then aſcribe unto GOD the perfections of his nature, or profeſs belief of a Reſurrection, both of the juſt and the unjuſt. But if men can be ſaved only through CHRIST, in the

way

way of faith and obedience, then true benevolence muſt be inſeparable from earneſt contention for Chriſtian faith and practice; muſt animate us openly to oppoſe every deviation from either, as full of danger; and engage us to join with intrepid zeal for the doctrine and precepts of CHRIST, fervent prayer to Him, "who "openeth the eyes of the blind, and "bringeth priſoners out of their priſon," that all who err may be led into the way of truth, and knowledge increaſe to make men wiſe unto ſalvation.

ERRATA.

Page 201. line 13. read *obtain the remiſſion.*
Page 249. *Note*, read *Schoetgenius.*

AN

A N

E S S A Y

On the PROPHECY of

ZACHARIAS.

CHAP. I.

On the Character of ZACHARIAS.

THE ſpirit of prophecy, one peculiar glory of the Jewiſh church, was entirely withdrawn for ſome ages before our Saviour's birth. It ceaſed with *Malachi*, who cloſed the canon of ancient ſcripture, and was not again vouchſafed for more than three hundred years. Judge then, what a ſubject of diſcourſe, ſurprize and joy, it muſt have been among the true Iſraelites, when it was publicly known, that GOD had once more raiſed up

a prophet amongſt his people: That *Zacharias*, a prieſt long diſtinguiſhed for piety, and excellency of life, was become, by miracle, a parent in his old age, his wife being old alſo, and full of the holy Ghoſt, proclaimed the approaching appearance of the Meſſiah.

Such was the ſtriking prelude, appointed to prepare the Jews for the reception of CHRIST, who by ſigns and wonders from his birth, was powerfully proved to be the LORD.

Yet *Zacharias*, excellent as he was, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of GOD blameleſs," greatly offends on this occaſion. For though aſſured by an angel, that he ſhould embrace a ſon of his own, he could not believe the marvellous promiſe. His unbelief is puniſhed upon the ſpot. In a moment he loſes his ſpeech and his hearing, and is cut off from all ſweet intercourſe with his friends, till the very fact, which he deemed incredible, came to paſs. Nine whole months he remained a moſt affecting ſpectacle; a monument of the ſin of doubting divine declarations, which we are bound to honour, by believing apparent impoſſibilities to be no obſtacle to the execution of GOD's purpoſes.

But

But what are the chief of ſaints before ſudden and violent temptations? How lamentably do they diſcover, no leſs than others, the power of corrupt nature, and ſtain their characters which appeared almoſt without a ſpot before! This teaches us, that the beſt have ever need to pray — "lead us not into temptation." Otherwiſe, if left to ourſelves, ſplendid privileges will only expoſe us to greater ſhame. Like *Zacharias*, when *Gabriel* came from heaven to aſſure him he ſhould be the father of one of the moſt excellent of the prophets, we ſhall fall into diſgrace, and incur the diſpleaſure of GOD.

At length when the illuſtrious babe was brought to be circumciſed, his father's mouth was opened, his tongue was looſed, and, full of the holy Ghoſt, he propheſied, ſaying,

LUKE i. 68.

Bleſſed be the Lord God of Iſrael, for he hath viſited and redeemed his people.

TO redeem, ſignifies to purchaſe the deliverance of captives, by paying down a ranſom-price, through which alone they obtain their liberty. None, therefore, but the

wretched and enſlaved; as common ſenſe teaches, can need this mercy. Since the Iſrael of GOD then are viſited, and redeemed, it follows, that they are naturally in a moſt miſerable condition. The word of truth affirms, and univerſal experience proves they are ſo, till they receive the benefit of redemption.

Before this bleſſed hour of deliverance, infernal ſelfiſhneſs, and enmity againſt the truth and government of GOD, poſſeſſes them. Senſuality, pride, impatience, anger, hatred, malice, and hypocriſy, by turns, as temptations occur, are manifeſted in their tempers and conduct; making them often a burden to themſelves, miſchievous to others, and always diſpleaſing to GOD.

This totally corrupt and wicked ſtate, I allow, is frequently coloured over with fair appearances of good humor, honor, ſocial virtue, and the exterior of religion; ſufficient to ſooth ſelf-love, and deceive ſpectators, no better than ourſelves: yet the infallible Judge pronounces, that "we are by nature children of wrath," *Eph.* ii. 3. and have in us a "carnal mind which is enmity againſt GOD," *Rom.* viii. 7.

Compared

Compared with this natural character of man, the unſearchable riches of grace ſhine to the higheſt advantage. For, inſtead of deſtroying his people, when in a ſtate ſo guilty, ſo deteſtable, the LORD GOD hath viſited and redeemed them.

CHAP. II.

On the miſtake of aſſerting man's native innocence.

THIS doctrine, taught by *Zacharias*, proves their error who conclude men are born innocent and good, as *Adam* was created. Such a ſuppoſition impeaches the prophets, apoſtles, and CHRIST himſelf, as ſlanderers of mankind, and blaſphemers of GOD. For they unanimouſly aſſert the ruin of us all, as a race of ſinners by birth. Upon this melancholy truth, they found the abſolute neceſſity of redemption; which indeed muſt ſink into nothing but a very violent and abſurd metaphor, if we are not in a fallen, loſt condition. For what abſurdity could be groſſer, than to affirm, that

men naturally upright, in peace with GOD, fully poſſeſſed of power ſo to continue, or to recover themſelves if they did ſin, were yet *viſited* in ſuch a ſtate, and *redeemed* from it?

Beſides, you can no ſooner embrace this deluſion, that man is not fallen, and loſt, than you will take offence at the name of a *Redeemer*. You will grow jealous of the high honors conſtantly paid to him, and inſtead of being thankful for his explaining more clearly the nature of religion, and revealing a future ſtate, which you allow he has done, you will feel a diſpoſition to quarrel continually with him, and his apoſtles, for ſpeaking in the manner they do of his ever-bleſſed perſon, his glorious work, and ſalvation.

Obſerve further, the fatal effect of this miſtake. Inſtead of being animated with love to GOD, and his ſervice, by ineſtimable benefits vouchſafed already to a creature vile and ſinful; you can receive nothing better from GOD on this ſide the grave, than a ſet of moral rules, with a declaration that the due obſervance of them may poſſibly be rewarded in another world, whilſt much more probably your violation of them may deſtroy your ſoul. In this

view

view of things, what certain bleſſing is there granted at all?

How much more beneficial and conſolatory is the doctrine which *Zacharias*, with all the inſpired writers, teaches! The Redemption of ſinners by the LORD GOD, from a ſtate equally infamous and miſerable—which challenges the moſt devout and thankful acceptance, as the chief of all the mercies of GOD; that every believer in JESUS, whilſt he obeys and adores his precepts, as an infallible prophet, might triumph alſo in the greatneſs of his ſalvation, as a complete Redeemer.

CHAP. III.

On the Redemption of the Church.

THE people of GOD, are all thoſe, whom the Father gave to CHRIST—a multitude out of every nation, and kindred, and people, and tongue—in number as the ſand upon the ſea-ſhore. They are diſtinguiſhed by

this title of higheſt honor, on account of GOD's ſpecial favour towards them, their devotedneſs to his ſervice, and love of his truth. All theſe were redeemed by the blood, and made righteous by the obedience of CHRIST. When he expired on the croſs, he delivered them from the wrath to come—He bruiſed the ſerpent's head—He made ſure, in the way of holineſs, the ſalvation of every member of his myſtical body, the church.

The following ſcriptures, in their natural, obvious ſenſe, eſtabliſh this glorious truth. "By the one offering of himſelf, this man "(CHRIST) for ever perfected them that are "ſanctified," *Heb.* ix. that is, ſeparated by the choice of GOD, and conſecrated to his ſervice. "This man, after he had offered one "ſacrifice for ſin, ſat down on the right "hand of GOD, from henceforth expecting "till his enemies become his footſtool." In grateful remembrance of this compleat redemption, the church is repreſented as breaking forth into the following joyful ſtrains,—"We "have a ſtrong city, ſalvation will GOD ap-"point for walls and bulwarks." The miniſters of CHRIST are charged to animate the faithful, in the midſt of all their ſufferings,

with

with words which breathe nothing but assurance of victory — "Comfort ye, comfort ye "my people, saith your GOD. Speak ye "comfortably to *Jerusalem*, say unto her, her "iniquity is pardoned — her warfare is ac- "complished — she hath received of the "LORD's hand, double for all her sins," *Isa.* xl. 1, 2.

In so perfect a manner, hath the LORD GOD of *Israel* visited, and redeemed his people.

This doctrine exposes their *mistake*, who fancy the excellency of the gospel consists in ascertaining a future state of rewards and punishments, and promising the aids of grace to succeed our good endeavours. Did the gospel contain *no more* than this, it must still prove insufficient to make obedience to the precepts of CHRIST either delightful, or practicable. Because from our very constitution, we all pant after present gratifications, and are seduced to depart from our duty by the prospect of present pleasures — which if religion will not afford, we shall continue to despise it, however it may be our future interest not to do so. We shall delay giving up ourselves to the

the ſervice of the LORD, till a time of ſickneſs or old age, whilſt we conclude ſo much more may be enjoyed from forbidden pleaſures at preſent, than we ſhall receive from obedience. This is, in fact, the grand prejudice againſt religion in the hearts of the young and lively, the proſperous and noble. A prejudice inſurmountable, ſo long as religion is repreſented to them, *principally* as precept on GOD's part, and obedience on ours — promiſing no higher joy to us *here*, than ſelf-applauſe for having done well, and hope on that ground, ſuch as it is, of being finally happy in heaven. For what in their eyes who pant for preſent joy, is all this, compared with brilliant aſſemblies, and ſenſual delights, or the great privileges of wealth, power, and titles? Do not theſe things notoriouſly captivate men of all ranks and ages, till they find in religion an immediate ſpring of better gratification? But this cannot be conſciouſneſs of our own virtues, becauſe in the beſt, their virtues bear no propo tion to their faults, as all know who are not blinded with pride. Neither can it be in the expectation of happineſs beyond the grave, becauſe our fears will be ſtronger than our hopes, till we are filled with peace and

joy

joy, as the primitive chriſtians were, *in believing*.

Some object therefore, moſt excellent, and to an high degree at preſent beneficial, is needful; the poſſeſſion of which will at once extinguiſh all eager deſire of forbidden joys, by affording better itſelf. Exactly ſuch an object is the LORD — not conſidered as a lawgiver, but as a friend and father — as emptying himſelf of his original glory, and becoming poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich for ever — dying for us on the croſs, and now reigning omnipotent on his eternal throne, giving to his faithful people aſſurance of perfect happineſs with himſelf in heaven. — Here is enough to make us exult. — Beauty in the object ſurpaſſing all the eye ever ſaw — benefits flowing from it in never-ceaſing ſtreams, above all the ear ever heard — and delight in the increaſing knowledge of both, beyond all the heart of man can conceive.

As ſuch an object, the Redeemer propoſed himſelf: and his apoſtles afterwards in this light ſet forth his glory. Witneſs his own declaration to one of the vileſt of women, which had

had instantly such an effect upon her, that she commended him to the whole city, after she had believed in him herself. "JESUS said "unto her, He that drinketh of the water "that I shall give him, shall never thirst; "but the water which I shall give him, shall "be in him a well of water, springing up in- "to *everlasting* life," *John* iv. 14. On another occasion, when the Jews were going to stone him, enraged at his making himself equal with GOD, behold, he asserts with a double asseveration, the present and eternal benefits inseparable from true faith in his name. "Ve- "rily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth "my word, and believeth on him that sent "me, hath everlasting life, *and shall not come* "*into condemnation*, but is passed from death "to life," *John* v. 24. *Paul*, *Peter* and *John* repeatedly assert the redemption of the people of GOD to be thus perfect. To the christians at *Corinth* the great apostle writes, and tells them, "All things are yours, whether the "world, or life, or death, things present, or "things to come, all *is* yours, and ye are "CHRIST's, and CHRIST is GOD's," 1 *Cor.* iii. 32. St *Peter*, teaching the very same doctrine, represents the new birth, as infallibly

libly connected with everlasting salvation, 1 *Peter* i. And St *John* affirms it when he says, "Behold, now are we the sons of GOD, "and it does not yet appear what we shall be, "*but we know* that when He shall appear, we "shall be like him, for we shall see him as "he is," 1 *John* iii.

Such a *compleat* redemption of sinful creatures, is a work in mercy and in grandeur worthy of GOD — a gift engaging the heart, from gratitude and admiration, to rejoice in paying obedience to him — a gift enabling every possessor of it, to challenge the whole world to produce an equal good — so far from leaving its possessor to envy the forbidden pleasures of the licentious, that it constrains him to wish for their *present* happiness — that it might please GOD, they should become partakers of the nobler delight, which springs up in his own heart, from the knowledge of redemption.

It is evidently then a mistake, of dangerous consequence, to suppose that rules for moral practice, or the revelation of a future state of rewards and punishments, constitute the principal excellency of the gospel — because the observ-

obſervance of theſe rules, which is to be rewarded, cannot be accompliſhed without ſome previous manifeſtation of the love of GOD, great enough to allure and captivate: for men muſt be won by love, not by terror. But commands to ſacrifice our deareſt luſts, to hate our own lives, and forſake all, under the heavieſt penalties, do not make us love the ſovereign power, which dictates in this manner. And to tell us we are only in a ſtate of probation, where all depends upon ourſelves, has no tendency to inſpire unreſerved confidence in the LORD our GOD; or to make us worſhip him with alacrity, ſing of him, and praiſe his name. This can be produced only by the diſcovery of his abundant mercy, and the unſearchable riches of his grace towards us in our firſt and natural ſtate, which makes our redemption ever appear marvellous in our eyes. "We love him, becauſe he firſt loved "us, and ſent his own Son to be the propitia-"tion for our ſins." This is the chriſtian's vaſt obligation to gratitude — this is the cord which binds his heart in devotedneſs to his GOD.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

CHRIST *the grand ſubject of all prophecy.*

THE ſcriptures above quoted affirm, that the eternal redemption of the people of GOD, was obtained by the life and death of CHRIST — He purchaſed the church with his own blood. So that the heavenly inheritance is as ſure to be enjoyed in due time, by every one of his members, as if they were already enthroned in glory. Yet the way leading to this final conſummation of all the deſigns of GOD's love towards them, is every ſtep thro' an enemy's country, who are always attacking us — whom we muſt reſiſt and conquer, or periſh.

Leſt, therefore, the power, number, and ſubtilty of our foes, rendered more dreadful by the advantage which they too often gain, ſhould make the chriſtian armies deſpair, *Zacharias*, after celebrating the Redemption of the church, immediately diſplays the almighty power, ever exerted in their defence. "And

— " And has raiſed up an horn of ſalvation " for us, in the houſe of his ſervant *David*."

The horn of an animal, is its weapon for defence and vengeance — its ornament and beauty too. It is uſed therefore in the prophetic ſtile, to denote the power of the ſtrongeſt Empires. — In the ſame ſenſe we are to underſtand it here. By this image the exceeding greatneſs of the Redeemer's ſtrength, and the never-ceaſing exertion of it in behalf of his church, are ſignified.

This horn of ſalvation, being the ſole preſervation of the ſaints in CHRIST, muſt certainly be the glory of the Bible — muſt appear to the eye of every intelligent reader, the grandeſt part of the whole, and be exalted from firſt to laſt in that bleſſed volume.

Zacharias affirms it is ſo; — for when GOD " raiſed up an horn of ſalvation, in the houſe " of his ſervant *David*," of whoſe ſeed CHRIST came according to the fleſh, this event was in conſequence of frequent predictions; — " As he ſpake by the mouth of his holy " prophets, which have been ſince the world " began."

What

What an honor is here put upon these witnesses? they were men of distinguished sanctity in the judgment of their GOD. They published not the product of their own invention, or private judgment, but the dictates of JEHOVAH, to give us the truest conceptions of his counsels, which we are capable of attaining in our present state. "For the pro-"phecy came not in old time, by the will of "man, but holy men of GOD spake as they "were moved by the holy Ghost," 2 *Peter* i. 21.

These prophets, who succeeded each other in a long series of more than two thousand years, spoke with *one mouth*. They delivered an uniform testimony concerning the same grand Personage; gradually unfolding his glories, till he appeared himself on earth, the living original portrayed in the prophetic books.

For the business of the prophets, was not only to mark with authority, as messengers from the LORD of hosts, the path of obedience and safety, of rebellion and ruin — not only to comfort with divine promises the afflicted church, and in the name of the LORD de-

nounce threatnings upon the wicked; another moſt important matter was in their commiſſion —"for the teſtimony of JESUS is the ſpirit "of prophecy," *Rev.* xix. 10. They were inſpired to delineate *him*, that upon his appearance, all that underſtood their writings, might cry out with the Baptiſt — "Behold "the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the "ſin of the world!"—might welcome his advent with the joyful acknowledgment—"Lo! "this is our GOD; we have waited for him, "and he will ſave us:—this is the LORD (of "whom *Moſes* and all the prophets ſpake) we "have waited for him; we will be glad and "rejoice in his ſalvation!"—That all ages of the world might find in them a demonſtration that JESUS was the promiſed Meſſiah, and adore the exact accompliſhment of every prediction in the ancient Oracles concerning him.

A ſeries of prophecy reſpecting the perſon of our Saviour, from the fall of *Adam* to the time of *Malachi*'s deceaſe, is at once a full proof of his infinite glory, and the certain inſpiration of the Bible. Let us take a ſhort ſurvey of it.

Imme-

Immediately after that one offence, which was the ruin of us all, GOD was pleaſed, before the gates of paradiſe were ſhut upon our guilty parents, to promiſe with his own mouth, in mitigation of their diſtreſs, that " the ſeed " of the woman (CHRIST) ſhould bruiſe the " ſerpent's head." At the diſtance of a few centuries *Enoch*, bleſſed with a viſion of his glory, propheſied, ſaying — " Behold the " LORD cometh with ten thouſand of his " ſaints to execute judgment." To *Abraham*, JEHOVAH deſcribes him as an infinite benefactor, " in whom all the nations of the earth " ſhould be bleſſed." *Jacob* calls him by the name of Shiloh, the peacemaker, " to whom ſhould be the gathering of the nations." Favoured with theſe notices of ſalvation, *Iſrael* abode in *Egypt*, till *Moſes*, ſent to deliver them, eſtabliſhed, from GOD's own mouth, a ſyſtem of religious rites, deſigned to teach them the work and offices of the Meſſiah — for the holy Ghoſt expreſsly calls the Levitical ſervice, a *figure* for the time then preſent, *Heb.* ix. 9. to ſerve unto the example and ſhadow of heavenly things.

It was given to lead our views forward to Him who was to come in the fleſh, the great

high-prieſt of his church, and the Saviour of it to the uttermoſt. And to keep alive the ſpirit of the whole Levitical ſervice, with its true intent, holy prophets were from time to time inſpired to deſcribe the grand circumſtances appropriated to diſtinguiſh CHRIST. His miraculous conception by the bleſſed virgin — the time and place of his birth — the miracles he ſhould perform — the reception of his doctrine — the treatment of his divine perſon — the circumſtances of his death, and the glory which ſhould follow from it, both to himſelf and his church, are all recorded with amazing exactneſs. So fully did the goodly fellowſhip of the prophets ſpeak on theſe things, that when the apoſtles were ſent to preach CHRIST, and convert the world, their ſole qualification for the arduous work, in point of knowledge, was to underſtand what was ſpoken concerning CHRIST, in *Moſes*, the Pſalms, and the Prophets.

This ſcripture doctrine expoſes ſeveral miſtakes in religion.

The *New* Teſtament, many tell us, is all that Chriſtians *need* to ſtudy — or at leaſt ought to regard much *more* than the old. For what

reaſon?

reaſon? Are they not ſo joined together by divine authority, that he who doth not with equal reverence receive both, can receive neither, as the oracles of GOD? Are they not both the dictates of JEHOVAH — "profitable "for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in "righteouſneſs?". The New Teſtament connually appeals to the Old. This JESUS and his Apoſtles urged in all their diſputes with the Jews, to prove that he was the CHRIST. Thoſe therefore who would lop off from the canon of chriſtian ſcriptures, the writings of *Moſes* and the prophets, or inſinuate they are of little uſe to us *now*, either have no good intentions, or know not what they do. Neglect theſe writings, and where will you find GOD deſcribed with ſuch pomp of majeſty, and ſelf-evident marks that He is *drawing* his own character? Where, thoſe high claims to uncontrolable dominion over the univerſe, as his own abſolute property and creation, repeated with ſuch emphaſis? Where the doctrine of a particular providence ſo abundantly exemplified? or JEHOVAH's love of righteouſneſs, and hatred of iniquity, marked in ſuch a variety of affecting narratives, and at the ſame time his condeſcending friendſhip for his

ſervants, under all their infirmities, ſo invariably manifeſted? Where will you find the true character, and glory of CHRIST, expreſſed in ſo many charming deſcriptions of his perſon, his power, and the bleſſings of his government? Several of theſe intereſting ſubjects are ſparingly treated on in the New Teſtament, becauſe the prophets had inſiſted upon them before at large. The buſineſs of the Evangeliſts was to prove by the hiſtory of the life of JESUS, that he was the Meſſiah. —The buſineſs of the Apoſtles, to bear witneſs of his reſurrection, and teach the doctrines which the ancient ſcriptures contained; which they were able to do, after our Saviour had opened their underſtanding, and expounded unto them the things concerning himſelf. But wherever the New Teſtament was received, immediately the ancient Oracles, able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in CHRIST JESUS, were received alſo, and Chriſtians were commanded to *ſtudy* them. Thus St *Paul* affirms, that the church of GOD is built "upon the prophets and apoſtles — "JESUS CHRIST himſelf being the chief cor-"ner-ſtone," *Eph.* ii. 20. St *Peter* ſtirs them up to be mindful of the words, which before were ſpoken by the holy prophets, and of the

commandment of the Apoſtles of the Lord and Saviour, 2 *Pet.* iii. 2. Is any preference to the New, above the Old Teſtament, given in theſe paſſages? No, it is a crafty device in thoſe who undermine the Oracles of GOD, to degrade one part of them, under pretence of greater reverence for the other, in order that they may reduce into a very ſmall compaſs what is allowed to be a teſtimony abſolutely deciſive — that ſo falſe doctrine may the more eaſily eſcape undiſcovered. A device, which of late years has proceeded to ſuch a length, that we are now told, the Epiſtles are not to be regarded, as of equal authority with the four Goſpels; any more than the Old Teſtament to be put upon a level with the New. In plain Engliſh, the Goſpels only are given by inſpiration of GOD. — Thoſe who are practiſed upon to believe this, will find much leſs difficulty in getting rid of the Goſpels too, at a convenient time, than in proving one ſmall part of ſcripture is the revelation of GOD — the far greater, only the private opinion of fallible men.

Hold faſt, therefore, the faith once delivered to the ſaints, that "*all* ſcripture is given by inſpiration of GOD." Contend earneſtly from

love to his name, your fellow-creatures, and the truth, that "GOD ſpake by the mouth of "his holy prophets ſince the world began"— that it is at our peril to deſpiſe thoſe writings, or fancy their uſe to the church in any degree ſuperſeded by the publication of the *new* ſcriptures.

CHAP. V.

On the miſtake in preaching morals principally.

THE doctrine before us, expoſes the miſtake of ſubſtituting lectures on morality and virtue, inſtead of diſcourſes on the horn of ſalvation. For though morality and virtue are truly venerable, and of abſolute neceſſity, yet when inculcated without reference to CHRIST, as their root, ſupport, and ſole cauſe of acceptance with GOD, they deceive and injure extremely — becauſe in this way we are led to conceive ourſelves virtuous, without thoſe deplorable defects and pollutions, which in fact are chargeable on the beſt. We are led

to

to imagine human excellence ſufficient — the ſure and only paſſport to heaven. And this deluſion muſt prejudice us bitterly againſt ſeveral capital parts of ſcripture, which pour contempt upon all expectations of divine favour, founded on our own obedience.—Hence we ſhall deny, or wreſt thoſe divine ſayings, in which CHRIST takes upon himſelf the whole glory of ſaving the children of men. And after we are infatuated with the idea of our own excellent virtue, one article of the Chriſtian creed will grow odious, then another — till we ſhall conclude in the end, that it is much more rational to be infidels, than Chriſtians. For the ſelf-made idol of deiſts, is a pleaſing object to a proud, corrupt mind — allows of human merit and boaſting — but the GOD of the Bible requires us to approach him with ſhame and confuſion of face for our defilement, and offences.

An unguarded recommendation of the excellency of moral virtue, to the neglect of the power and grace of CHRIST, has contributed to bring on the preſent increaſe of Deiſm, and revolt from the goſpel, much more than all the formal aſſaults of its avowed enemies. And Deiſm is often defended upon this very principle,

principle, that the ſtreſs laid upon articles of faith in the Bible, proves a public miſchief, by drawing off mens attention from perſonal virtue, and teaching low, diſparaging ideas of its worth. Thus a zeal for morality and virtue, which are of indiſpenſible neceſſity, may be, and very often is ſo miſguided, as to prove fatal to the ſoul. For whether men will hear, or ſpurn it from them as an impoſition, CHRIST is "the way, the truth, and the life — no man "cometh to the Father but by him," *John* xiv. 6. "He that hath not the Son, hath "not life," 1 *John* v. 12. though his virtues may be extolled, even as a pattern for imitation. "If any man love not the Lord JESUS "CHRIST, let him be anathema, maranatha," 1 *Cor.* xvi. 22.

Know then the true ſtandard, by which you muſt try the ſpirits — every preacher you hear, and every religious book you read. It ſhould not ſatisfy you, that virtue is earneſtly inculcated, and obedience to the commandments of GOD preſſed home, from conſiderations of his authority, and a judgment to come — for much more than this is required. You ought to eſteem the performance deplorably defective, and the preacher no fellow-labourer with the

the prophets and apoſtles, unleſs he diſplays the horn of ſalvation — unleſs every idol in the human heart, which uſurps his place, be thrown down — and all the proud pretenſions of ſelf-ſufficient moraliſts, and ſelf-conceited phariſees, be expoſed. If a chriſtian preacher or writer treats of morality and virtue in ſuch a light, that no Jew or Turk would find any offence in his work, is there not cauſe to charge groſs ignorance on the preacher or writer with reſpect to CHRIST? If topics which Jews or Turks would themſelves uſe, are chiefly uſed by *us* to enforce moral practice, what advantage does the goſpel afford in this grand point? They who can hear, or read ſuch diſcourſes without grief of heart, from love to GOD and man, are ſtrangers to what the ſcripture teaches of the glory of CHRIST's religion; and, were they to ceaſe profeſſing it, would ſuffer, it ſhould ſeem, no great loſs in their ſpiritual ſtate.

CHAP.

CHAP. VI.

CHRIST *the Redeemer of his church from the curſe of the law.*

ALL the prophets, who with one mouth have ſpoken of CHRIST, ſpeak of him as raiſed up, " that his people ſhould be ſaved " from their enemies, and out of the hands of " all who hate them." We are born in captivity, and after we recover ſpiritual liberty, our enemies aſſault us all our days. Some of theſe enemies, being inviſible, are little regarded, or known by the world. Conſequently, when they hear of a horn of ſalvation, raiſed up to deliver ſinners out of their hands, they know not how to conceive the meaning of ſuch expreſſions, much more to believe their truth. For if they live in peace, quietneſs, proſperity, reputation, and a good opinion of themſelves, they cannot underſtand there is any better condition on earth, nor deſire deliverance.

Thus pride and ignorance hiding our condition from us, we preſume we are ſafe, when our

our real circumſtances are deplorably ruinous. The friendly light of GOD's word and Spirit are ſent to diſcover this groſs deluſion. They ſhew us where we are, what we are, and what we want. That we are a race of ſinners, in baſe and voluntary ſubjection to Satan, the world, and the fleſh, condemned by the righteous law of GOD, and every moment liable to the arreſt of the king of terrors.

Each of theſe foes, as ſoon as their power is underſtood, will be found unconquerable by any might of our own — of conſequence deſerving eminently the name of enemies — compared with whom, all we naturally dread, as hoſtile to us, will ſeem as nothing. Theſe enemies are Sin, the Law, Satan, the World, the Fleſh, and Death. But as the law is the ſtrength of ſin; as ſin is only committed through the inſtigation of Satan, the world, or the fleſh; and death enſues as the penalty of ſin; deliverance from the power of theſe enemies, neceſſarily includes victory over ſin, a victory everlaſting. Theſe enemies, therefore, we ſhall particularly conſider; and the way in which CHRIST ſaves his people out of their hands.

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The firſt enemy is the Law. Man receiving from GOD a reaſonable ſoul, with all he poſſeſſes, is abſolutely dependent upon him, and neceſſarily obliged to obey his will in whatever inſtance it is made known. The penalty on failing to pay this moſt rightful homage, is death, the loſs of the favour of GOD, and the miſery of his diſpleaſure. Thus the angels in heaven, by one act of diſobedience, loſt all their glory, and are wretched beyond expreſſion. Thus *Adam* in paradiſe by one offence deſtroyed himſelf, and his poſterity. The ſame law, with the ſame ſanction, GOD publiſhed in ten commandments, accompanied with all the terrible enſigns of his almighty power, to more than a million of his ſubjects aſſembled at the foot of mount *Sinai*; engraving it afterwards with his own finger in two tables of ſtone. This law, tho' in itſelf holy, and juſt, and good, taking occaſion from our ſin, ſlays us. It is become our great accuſer and dreadful adverſary. It is againſt us in every attempt we naturally make to eſcape from its eternal condemnation. It is contrary to us, breathing out righteous vengeance againſt our perſons, as offenſive to an holy GOD, and guilty before him

him — ſpurning all our prayers, our tears, and our amendment, as no more compenſation for violating its command, than the murderers tears, or better behaviour, are for his enormous offence.

The ſtrictneſs, therefore, of the law, in its demands, and the weight of its ſentence upon tranſgreſſion, render it inſupportable to ſinners — an accuſer which ſtops every mouth, brings in the whole world guilty before GOD, and as vile criminals condemns us all to hell.

Out of the hands of this enemy, the horn of ſalvation was raiſed up to deliver his people. "For GOD ſent his own Son, made of "a woman, made under (that is, ſubject to) "the law, to redeem them that were under "the law," *Gal.* iv. 4, 5. "The ſtrength of "ſin is the law, but thanks be to GOD who "giveth us the victory, through our Lord "JESUS CHRIST," 1 *Cor.* xv. 56, 57. The proceſs, or ſeveral ſteps neceſſary to be taken, in order to accompliſh this deliverance, are worthy of everlaſting admiration. For this great purpoſe, GOD's own Son began his life in the fleſh, in perfect purity, not conceived in ſin, as we do ours. "Fooliſhneſs is bound

"up

" up in the heart of a child," rooted and rivetted there, *Prov.* xxii. 15. — but the holy JESUS grew in wiſdom, as in ſtature. In manhood we indulge our evil appetites, and live to ſelf — He did always the things which pleaſed GOD, and fulfilled all righteouſneſs. We are found full of faults, whenever our conduct is ſeverely ſcanned: and the accuſer of the brethren, might his condemning voice be heard, can always alledge with truth a thouſand charges againſt us. JESUS challenged his eagle-eyed foes to convince him of ſin, and told his choſen friends immediately before he ſuffered the laſt aſſault from Satan, " the " prince of this world cometh, but hath no- " thing in me," not the leaſt taint of corruption to work on, or ſlighteſt ſtain of evil to lay to my charge. Becauſe, whatever the law enjoins of external obedience, or ſpiritual worſhip, as due from man to GOD, was in all his actions, in all his words, in every temper, in every imagination of the thoughts of his heart.

Thus did GOD's own Son, the Lord of all worlds, fulfil the law, in the form of a ſervant, that he might ſave his people out of its hands — that in the very manner of their redemption,

demption, and acceptance with GOD, thro' his divine obedience performed for them, the law might appear in the eyes of all intelligent creatures, more glorious than if no offence againſt it had ever been forgiven.

This doctrine corrects a miſtake often made by many in forming an eſtimate of the obedience of CHRIST.

The riſing ſun in ſummer is not ſo charming to an eye of ſenſe, as his life to a mind which can admire ſpiritual excellency. So compleat an union of every lovely quality, without one ſingle flaw, has compelled even his blaſphemers to do him honor. And it is common to expatiate on the conſummate perfection of his character, as a copy for imitation. But here many ſtop. This indeed gives him pre-eminence above the moſt admired of men, yet is not half his due — for the ſcripture places the ſinleſs life of JESUS in an infinitely higher light — not only as a perfect pattern, found in no other man, or a neceſſary qualification to make atonement, but as a work of moſt efficacious beneficence — of a kind abſolutely ſingular, ſurpaſſing beyond all compariſon every other ſervice the

 almighty

almighty ever received, and reaching in its saving virtue, through all eternity. For no creature can *transfer* the benefit of his own performances, since perfect obedience is due from every creature, on his own account, to GOD, by an indefeasible right: but the unrivalled glory of the life of CHRIST, consists in this peculiarity, it is the righteousness of GOD: by which myriads of sinners to the ends of the earth, and the end of time, are made righteous. To them his righteousness is imputed, because performed by compact upon their account, for their salvation; accepted as such by the Father, and deemed so really theirs, that the righteousness of the law is said to be fulfilled in them, because fulfilled by CHRIST, who is their Surety, and with whom they are one.

Observe what abounding evidence the scripture affords of this truth. Look so far back as *Abraham*. The first time believing is ever mentioned in the Bible, *imputed righteousness* is mentioned too. For when he believed in the LORD, *IT*, that is to say, what was promised —what his faith received, and on which it terminated, even CHRIST, was counted unto him for righteousness, *Gen.* xv. 6. This instance

ſtance the apoſtle brings in proof of juſtification by CHRIST — which would have been impertinent, if not CHRIST's righteouſneſs, but *Abraham*'s act of faith, had been the cauſe of his acceptance with GOD. Many paſſages in the Pſalms extol this divine righteouſneſs as the glory and boaſt of the church — but when GOD would comfort his people with a more full revelation of the office and work of the Meſſiah, he eſtabliſhed this doctrine by a moſt majeſtic proclamation. JEHOVAH beholds all the nations of the world under condemnation for ſin, but inſtead of executing vengeance upon their guilty heads, he calls from heaven with this ſweet voice of mercy — "Look unto me, and be ſaved, all the ends of the earth — for I am GOD, and beſide me there is none elſe. I have ſworn by myſelf, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteouſneſs, and ſhall not return: — unto me every knee ſhall bow, and every tongue ſhall ſwear, ſurely ſhall one ſay, In the LORD have I righteouſneſs, and ſtrength," *Iſa.* xlv. 22, 24.

That this LORD, in whom the church exults, from aſſurance of poſſeſſing in him both righteouſneſs and ſtrength, is CHRIST, ap-

pears plainly from the application of these words to him twice in the New Testament; and that the righteousness here intended, is for justification before GOD, is no less plain, because the concluding sentence of this proclamation, again affirms — "In the LORD shall all the "seed of *Israel* be justified, and in him shall "they glory."

As our everlasting welfare depends on the grace revealed in this truth, the inspired writers frequently assert it. *Jeremiah*, next in succession after the above proclamation, and well acquainted with it, prophecies, that the very name by which CHRIST should be adored is this, alluding to the proclamation, "The LORD our righteousness," *Jer.* xxiii. 5. The angel appears to *Daniel*, and tells him, Messiah was to come at such a fixed time, not only to finish transgression, to make an end of sin, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, *but to bring in everlasting righteousness*, Dan. ix. 24.— Our Saviour exhorts his disciples to seek in the first place the kingdom of GOD and his righteousness, the latter being the title to the former — and the office of the holy Ghost, he affirms, is, "to convince the world of righteousness." — St *Paul*, who did not receive the

gospel

goſpel he preached from man, nor was taught it, but by revelation of JESUS CHRIST, after his kingdom was erected, inſiſts on the imputed righteouſneſs of CHRIST — he ſtiles the goſpel, "the power of GOD unto ſalvation," becauſe "*therein* is revealed the righteouſneſs "of GOD," *Rom.* i. 17. which a little after, in the ſame Epiſtle, he declares, is "by faith "of JESUS CHRIST, unto all, and upon all "them that believe," *Rom.* iii. 22.

This declaration I conceive, after great pains uſed to explain its meaning away, does clearly aſſert the obnoxious doctrine of imputed righteouſneſs. For to ſay the eſſential righteouſneſs of GOD, is unto all, and upon all who believe, is nonſenſe — or that this expreſſion means faith, or juſtification by faith, muſt be nonſenſe too, becauſe it is plainly *diſtinguiſhed* here as the object of faith, and the cauſe of juſtification. Ceaſe from torturing the text, and according to its plain ſenſe it muſt mean the imputed righteouſneſs of CHRIST, who is GOD. Neither can this be called a foreign righteouſneſs, becauſe it is imputed only to thoſe who are members of CHRIST.—But the members of CHRIST, according to divine conſtitution, are one with CHRIST in the covenant

of redemption, and in the communication of life from him their head — An union no leſs real, than that which ſubſiſts between fathers and their own offspring — It is, therefore, often repreſented under that image — " Behold me, " and the children thou haſt given me."

Further, St *Paul* declares, that the perdition of the Jews, who rejected CHRIST, was from their ignorance of the righteouſneſs of GOD, and refuſal to ſubmit to it — He affirms, that " CHRIST is made of GOD unto his church, " righteouſneſs; and the church is made in " him, the righteouſneſs of GOD." — He ſtates at large the way by which death entered, and by which ſalvation is obtained; that " as by " the offence of one, judgment came upon " all men to condemnation; even ſo by the " righteouſneſs of one, the free gift came " upon all men, unto juſtification of life — " for as by one man's diſobedience many " were made ſinners, ſo by the obedience of " one, ſhall many be made righteous."

After this, what more could this apoſtle add in proof of his favourite doctrine? Only that proof which he did. I mean, his pouring contempt on all the love his heart felt towards

towards GOD, on all his usefulness towards men, and on every excellent grace which he in so eminent a degree possessed—On all this he pours contempt, counting it no better than loss, or dung, to merit his justification.—In *this* light he rejects it with disdain, that "he "might win CHRIST, and be found in him; "not having his own righteousness, which is "of the law, but the righteousness which is "of GOD by faith."

Perfectly harmonizing with his brother *Paul*, St *Peter* addresses the church, as a society highly favoured in having obtained like precious faith with him, through, or rather in the righteousness of GOD our Saviour. Taking all these divine declarations together, they are surely sufficient to prove the mistake of depreciating the life of CHRIST, by assigning to it no other use and influence, than as an example; or a qualification to become a sacrifice for sin. We are warranted by them, to consider every part of the Saviour's obedience as beneficial to his people, and imputed to them—to contemplate Him as living and labouring every day for so many years in human flesh, that in their behalf, "grace might reign through righteousness unto "eternal life, by JESUS CHRIST our Lord."

CHAP. VII.

On the Atonement.

THE perfect righteouſneſs of CHRIST, imputed to his people, was neceſſary, in order that GOD might juſtify them, with ample honor to his own law. And the infliction of the penalty annexed to diſobedience on the offenders' ſubſtitute, was no leſs neceſſary to make manifeſt the evil of ſin, the divine indignation againſt it, and reconcile in their exerciſe towards his people, his juſtice and mercy, his truth and holineſs. "For "it became him, by whom are all things, "and for whom are all things, by making "the captain of their ſalvation perfect thro' "*ſufferings*, to bring many ſons unto glory. "And becauſe the children are partakers of "fleſh and blood, he alſo took part of the "ſame, that through death, he might deſtroy "death, and him that had the power of death, "that is the devil," *Heb.* ii.

For

For these reasons, CHRIST, after paying perfect obedience to the law, died a death absolutely without parallel. All, besides himself, die, because they are sinners. He, because sin was imputed to him, and punished both in his body and soul. By the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of GOD, yet according to his own voluntary engagement, JESUS endured all that variety of misery, which sin deserves. He endured poverty, shame, and torturing pain of body and mind. He died under loud execrations, which were poured out upon him from a thousand tongues — He died under the curse of the law, transfixed by the sword of eternal justice to his cross. Prodigies then met together, which were never seen before, nor will be seen again. — From different causes, heaven, earth, and hell seemed to conspire together to increase his torment, far above all comparison. For this we know from infallible authority, "that "the father spared him not — that it pleased "the father to bruise him — that he suffered, "the just for the unjust, bearing our sins in "his own body on the tree."

By virtue of this death, the full import of it, being known and trusted in, the people of

GOD

GOD are delivered from the menaces of the law in their conſciences. They become dead to it by the body of CHRIST, being "married "to another, even to him, who was raiſed "from the dead, that we ſhould bring forth "fruit unto GOD," *Rom.* vii.

By this means their obedience to him, becomes pure in its intention, and in its extent reaches to every commandment — a ſervice, not from ſons of the bond-woman, but of the free — not paid for wages to a maſter, but from affection to a beloved father. Not as compelled by that awful threat, "Do this "and live, offend and periſh;" but from a heart devoted to his ſervice, and penetrated with a ſenſe of his high and holy authority.

CHAP. VIII.

On the neceſſity of preaching the Law.

THIS doctrine of the redemption of the church from the curſe of the law, through the death and righteouſneſs of CHRIST, proves it

it is a great miſtake to ſuppoſe the law is not to be preached to Chriſtians.

" If any man ſpeak, ought he not to ſpeak " as the Oracles of GOD?"—But they inſiſt on the ſpecial grand deſign of the law. They tell us it was given to make ſin abound, and appear exceeding ſinful—to ſhut up as priſoners all under ſin, and thus render the news of ſalvation by the LORD, tranſporting to our hearts. The Oracles of GOD do peremptorily aſſert, that the Holy Ghoſt, the giver of life, ſtrength and comfort to the ſoul, is received, " not by the works of the law" (the doctrine of acceptance with GOD, by perſonal obedience) " but by the hearing of faith"—of ſalvation through faith. They pronounce thoſe to be in the way to perdition, who ſeek righteouſneſs, as it were, by the works of the law, even though they have a zeal for GOD. They divide mankind, not only into moral and immoral, religious and profane, as Philoſophers and Phariſees are wont to do, but into two claſſes unknown to either of them—thoſe who are of the works of the law, and therefore *curſed*; and thoſe who are of faith, and therefore *bleſſed* with faithful *Abraham*.

From

From theſe paſſages (and many of like import might be cited) you may ſee how fully the Oracles of GOD treat of the law. What marvel then, if upon ceaſing to preach the law, preaching loſes its uſefulneſs! When the law is not explained, it is impoſſible that ſermons, however moral, or ſerious, ſhould ever teach ſcriptural ideas of the evil of ſin, or the nature of pure obedience to GOD; or of the neceſſity of redemption by CHRIST.

On the contrary, open the nature, uſe and deſign of the law, it will ſoon prove itſelf an engine of divine appointment, and admirable efficacy. By laying "judgment to the line, "and righteouſneſs to the plummet," it ſweeps away the refuge of lies, under which ſinners, of every ſort, take ſhelter. It brings all who hear what the law ſaith, into a ſalutary deſpair of ever eſcaping the wrath to come by perſonal obedience, and ſo makes the horn of ſalvation always appear the ſame neceſſary defence, and glorious bleſſing, which the ſcripture affirms he actually is.

Thoſe who omit preaching the law, ſuppoſe themſelves juſtified in doing ſo, by limiting what is ſaid on this great ſubject, to the

Jewiſh

Jewiſh ceremonial law. A groſſer miſtake, ignorance itſelf ſcarcely ever made, though many great names have long pleaded in its behalf. For can you call the ceremonial law, the law written, and engraven on two tables of ſtone? Can you call it ſpiritual, or apply it to bring in the *whole world* guilty before GOD? Yet theſe are the ſpecific qualities belonging to that law, of which the apoſtle treats. Or can you think, that when he ſays, "the *law* is *good* if a man uſe it *lawfully*," immediately naming the many *immoral* offenders which it condemns, that he had any reſpect at all to the ceremonial law?

I am not ignorant, that it is urged alſo by thoſe eminent preachers, who never apply the law as the miniſtration of death, to the conſciences of their hearers, that Chriſtians are now under a milder diſpenſation, which requires ſincere, not ſinleſs obedience. But in this aſſertion there is much fallacy. For by Chriſtians muſt be meant either nominal, or real ones—if only nominal, they are under the law, ſeeking to enter into life by keeping the commandments, and depending upon their own obedience in conjunction with the merits of CHRIST, to ſave them. They are therefore

of

of the works of the law. To reſcue them from this deluſion, the perfect ſtandard of duty, with its ſanction, muſt be ſet before them—They muſt be weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, and be convinced how much they are found wanting; and he who does this moſt faithfully, to deſtroy all their falſe confidence, will prove their kindeſt friend.

But if by Chriſtians under a milder diſpenſation than the law, are meant real ones, who in the nervous phraſe of ſcripture, "have "fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope "ſet before them;" they are not only under a milder diſpenſation, but under grace itſelf. Yet before they had acceſs into that grace, wherein they now ſtand, they were every one of them, with the great apoſtle, "ſlain by the "commandment," or they would not have fled to CHRIST for refuge — through the law they became dead to the law, and are the very perſons, who prove to demonſtration, both the neceſſity and ſucceſs of applying it to the conſcience.

The increaſing deſertion of our churches, beyond the example of former ages, is confeſſed,

feſſed, and is indeed alarming *. Should not then all thoſe teachers, who from Sunday to Sunday ſee no increaſe of their hearers, or good effect of their inſtructions, change their doctrine? Should they not at leaſt make the experiment, however ſtrange it may appear, whether proving that all men are condemned for ſin — without a poſſibility of being ever accounted juſt before GOD, thro' their own virtue, will not be attended with better ſucceſs? Whether rich and poor will not be more affected, by full proof that they are abſolutely loſt, unleſs the horn of ſalvation delivers them, than by leaving them to think their own goodneſs will comfort them here, and open the kingdom of heaven to them hereafter? Whether a more conſcientious obedience will not be produced, when we ſee ourſelves continually indebted for life to CHRIST alone, as the children in the furnace were to a miracle of goodneſs, than can ſpring from conſiderations

* This deſertion of our churches is imputed to the increaſe of Methodiſm, as it is called—But without cauſe, ſince it is moſt obſervable in places where there are no Methodiſt teachers — On the contrary, in every pariſh where the law is ſcripturally taught, both an increaſe in the number and attention of the hearers is evident beyond diſpute.

conſiderations of profit and loſs, according to our own conceit of a progreſs, or decline in virtue?

CHAP. IX.

Peace of conſcience towards GOD, *not the reward of imperfect virtue.*

THE doctrine that the church is redeemed from the curſe of the law, by CHRIST's own obedience unto the death of the croſs, proves the miſtake of ſuppoſing peace of conſcience towards GOD is the reward of virtue. Good people, it is conſtantly ſaid, have a right to be perfectly free from from all fears about the future, from the pleaſing review of a well-ſpent life. From hence the vain and arrogant fancy, that even the wretched fragments of what has only ſome ſemblance of virtue, in their own conduct, entitles them to its reward. Therefore they grow ſtill more proud, and preſumptuous — for ſince no perfect rule of duty is fixed, the vain and arrogant always conclude themſelves tolerably

tolerably virtuous upon the whole, and thro' this ſoothing error, ſtifle every riſing conviction of their danger.

Thoſe of a modeſt and ſerious turn, it bitterly diſtreſſes, driving them often to diſtraction, and even to death for refuge: becauſe there are many perſons, it is certain, much troubled in conſcience, who the world judge need not be ſo at all. They are juſt and upright in their dealings, of a kind and generous ſpirit, devout, and careful to avoid all known offences.

Now that perſons of ſo high a character, ſhould not poſſeſs this certain reward of virtue, peace of conſcience towards God, appears very ſtrange. Men ignorant of the truth, always with great confidence impute this to lowneſs of ſpirits, weakneſs of mind, or a ſuperſtitious caſt, which involves every object it beholds in gloom. But where there is no weakneſs of mind, bodily diſtemper, or ſuperſtitious caſt, this is found to be the caſe with many perſons — And the true cauſe of their miſery, is from having believed peace of conſcience towards God, is the reward of virtue, as we all naturally do, ſtill forgeting that it

is *perfect* virtue alone, which is the parent of peace towards GOD. Not finding, therefore, this peace, but on the contrary fear and guilt, they conclude he is angry with them. This anger they endeavour to avert by better obedience, yet ſtill find no comfort; nor can they, while they ſeek it in a way derogatory to the obedience which the LORD himſelf performed. For as this perfect obedience is the ſole cauſe of our juſtification before GOD, the ſentence of condemnation muſt remain in the conſcience (if we make a true judgment of our ſtate) until CHRIST be all our peace and hope; becauſe the utmoſt efforts to lead a good life, muſt leave us ſtill deſtitute of the righteouſneſs which the law requires. We may perſevere in prayer — we may faſt — we may give alms — we may watch over every word, and every thought, and even agonize to keep the commandments — thouſands have done as much — yet after all, we ſhall offend in many things.

Whilſt men, therefore, ſeek peace with GOD, from conſciouſneſs of their own goodneſs, they remain under the curſe of the law, which they are always breaking. So long

then

then as their earneſtneſs for ſalvation continues, and this error is believed, they muſt be in fear. They can find no reſt to their ſouls, till inſtead of laboring to attain it by works of righteouſneſs, they ſeek it by faith in CHRIST. Could the anſwer of a good conſcience towards GOD be really enjoyed in any other way, the ſcripture would be falſified — becauſe it conſtantly aſcribes this ineſtimable bleſſing to the blood of the croſs, and to CHRIST's reſurrection, as the ſurety and head of his church — calls it his peace, given to his diſciples, upon their looking to him for pardon, in deſpair of help from any other quarter.

Matter of fact, the ſubject of daily obſervation confirms this doctrine. Who are free from diſtreſs of conſcience, before CHRIST has made them free? Thoſe only who abridge the commandments of GOD, or are daring enough to think, he ought not to require more, than they find themſelves inclined to do. Or thoſe, who in the dotage of ſelf-love, ſmitten with admiration of their own beauty, ſee in themſelves nothing amiſs—Not a ſingle perſon, endued with the ſmalleſt degree of

humility, and earneſtly ſtriving to do his duty, but lives in bitter bondage, and frequent diſtreſs, till the knowledge of the Prince of peace gives comfort to his ſoul.

To adviſe, therefore, perſons of good character, when troubled in conſcience, to take confidence from their good life — to tell them they can have no cauſe to fear, ſince if ſuch worthy people as they be, are not ſafe, what muſt become of all the world; is a fatal miſtake. Neither by any means preſs them to join in the circle of the gay, and the merriment of the thoughtleſs, as a cure for their melancholy. Such counſel has already deſtroyed its thouſands. For the perſons, to whom theſe means are preſcribed, having ſtrove in vain thus to ſhake off the pain of a guilty conſcience, when they are directed to repeat the ſame methods as their only remedy, muſt conclude their wound incurable. — No marvel then, if ſtrangling ſhould be choſen, rather than life.

To remove their diſtreſs, a totally different method muſt be uſed. They muſt be taught, that they are much worſe, and more ſinful, than

than they ſuppoſe themſelves to be — that all they have ever done, or can do from the motives which have governed them, is wrong — becauſe the thought of making peace with GOD by their own obedience, is an inſult which pride caſts upon his law, high treaſon againſt his crown, and fruſtrates his grace. They muſt be told, that a painful ſight of their ſpiritual ſtate, is deſigned in great mercy to undeceive them — to bring them to a confeſſion, that they are loſt, unleſs the atoning blood of CHRIST be received by them, as all their ſalvation. Conſciouſneſs of guilt, they muſt be aſſured, will ever pain them, ſenſible as they are now become of the great extent of their duty, ſo long as they expect peace of conſcience from perſonal holineſs, not from CHRIST's obedience, which has magnified the law, vanquiſhed Satan, and redeemed the church, to the great glory of GOD, through all eternity. They muſt be directed to conſider with great attention and prayer, the ſcriptures, deſigned to overthrow the pillars of ſelf-righteouſneſs, and to bring all fleſh upon an abſolute level in point of juſtification before GOD — and when the utter impoſſibility

of obtaining true peace of conſcience towards Him by perſonal obedience is perceived, they will begin ſincerely to apply to the great Phyſician, the merciful Healer, whoſe office, pleaſure, and glory it is, "to bind up them that "are broken in heart, and give liberty to "them that are bruiſed."

Generally ſpeaking, theſe things are new to perſons troubled in conſcience, at leaſt point out a way of relief, which has not been tried by them, and which upon trial is ſure to ſucceed to the eſtabliſhment of their ſouls in comfort.

I have often ſeen the worſt conſequences follow from giving any other advice to perſons laboring to get peace by perſonal obedience, and the moſt pleaſing ones in every caſe from confeſſion of ſinfulneſs, and reliance on the blood of CHRIST to cleanſe from all unrighteouſneſs.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

On the power and devices of Satan.

A Second enemy, into whoſe hands we are fallen, is Satan. For though many affect to treat the agency, and even exiſtence of this execrable ſpirit with deriſion, yet the ſcripture, from the beginning to the cloſe of man's eventful hiſtory, ſpeaks much and awfully of both. Not to admit theſe paſſages as full proof, is to make the Bible itſelf contemptible for the violent abſurdity of its phraſes.

Leaving, therefore, theſe modern Sadducees, if they will, to ſport themſelves with their own deceivings, let us attend to the Oracles of GOD, and underſtand from them what have been, and ſtill are the wiles and and malicious activity practiſed againſt man, by that old ſerpent, the devil.—If we enquire of the Word of GOD who ſeduced our firſt parents, robbing them of their original righteouſneſs, and paradiſe? Who afterwards debauched their poſterity to proſtitute themſelves

to idols, over the face of the whole earth; to ſhed in ſacrifice before them rivers of human blood*? Who dared repeatedly to attack in perſon our incarnate God, inſtigated *Judas* to betray, the Jews to crucify him, and after his aſcenſion to perſecute unto death his members? To each of theſe queſtions the Oracles of God reply—Satan did it all:—Who, for thus practiſing upon the children of men, to their eternal ruin, is branded with the names of tempter, deceiver, liar, accuſer, and murderer, and charged with "going about "like a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may "devour." Though theſe deteſtable names and qualities belong to him, he is nevertheleſs "the prince and god of this world, working "in the children of diſobedience, to do the "luſts of him their father;" who, for this reaſon, are called "children of the wicked one," and doomed to ſuffer for their ſins in that world of woe, "prepared for the devil and his an-"gels."

Thus full is the account in holy writ, not only of his exiſtence, but his empire over us, his

* *De Solis*, in his hiſtory of the conqueſt of *Mexico*, tells us, that the *Indians* ſacrificed in that city every year, twenty thouſand lives to their accurſed idol.

his activity, and too ſucceſsful malice in compleating the miſery of man.

As an accuſer, and adverſary, he impeaches the people of GOD of high crimes againſt the law, urging from thence the neceſſity of their condemnation, as rebels with himſelf. To invalidate this claim, CHRIST expired, "blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, which was againſt us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his croſs — By this very act ſpoiling principalities and powers of their grand plea againſt his people, and making a ſhew of them openly; (as thus defeated in their malicious accuſation,) triumphing over them in it," *Col.* ii. 14, 15.

The prophet's viſion beautifully exemplifies this intereſting truth — "He ſhewed me, ſaith *Zechariah*, *Joſhua* the high prieſt, ſtanding before the angel of the LORD (*i. e.* CHRIST) and Satan ſtanding (as the accuſer in Jewiſh courts of judicature was wont to do) at his right hand. And the LORD ſaid unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan, even the LORD who hath choſen *Jeruſalem*, rebuke thee: Is not this

"a

" a brand plucked out of the fire? Now " *Joſhua* was clothed with filthy garments, " and ſtood before the angel, as a perſon ac- " cuſed and charged with ſin — And he (the " LORD) anſwered and ſpake unto thoſe who " ſtood before him, Take away the filthy gar- " ments from him — and unto him he ſaid, " Behold, I have cauſed thine iniquity to " paſs from thee, and I will clothe thee with " change of raiment," *Zech.* iii. 1—4.

What is repreſented ſo forcibly in this viſion, as the way of delivering *Joſhua* the high prieſt from Satan's malicious arraignment, is expreſsly declared to be the way, in which all the ranſomed of the LORD are ſaved. Their adverſary, the accuſer of the brethren, follows them, as it were, into the court of judgment, where, to his everlaſting confuſion, he hears this challenge proclaimed in their behalf — " Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge " of GOD's elect? to proſecute them at his " bar, as guilty? It is GOD that juſtifieth, " who is he that condemneth? It is CHRIST " that died, yea rather, that is riſen again, " who is even at the right hand of GOD, who " alſo maketh interceſſion for us," *Rom.* viii. 33, 34.

But

But Satan ſeeks our deſtruction, not only by impeaching us of high crimes againſt the law, and honor, and majeſty of GOD, but by various ſubtle temptations, practiſing upon us to this moment, as he did at firſt upon our original parents. Trace the wiles by which he prevailed over them. Did he not beguile *Eve* to imagine, that GOD would not avenge their impious offence, and that death ſhould not follow upon diſobedience? "Ye ſhall "not die," ſaid the ſerpent. By ſuggeſtions of the ſame blaſphemous kind, he ſtill leads ſinners captive at his will. How often does he deceive men to imagine, ſin is not the curſed, deteſtable thing, which the word of GOD conſtantly affirms it to be? that our Maker will never puniſh the indulgence of our natural paſſions, to which we are ſo ſtrongly excited by that very ſituation in which he hath placed us? that the gate of heaven is not ſo ſtrait, nor the way ſo narrow, that only a few, out of many, ſhould find it? that all will not be loſt, who die condemned by the verdict of the Bible? Entertain more honorable notions of GOD, be more kind and liberal in your ſentiments — be aſſured all will be happy — the univerſal parent has taken effectual care, that vice ſhall ever find its own

own ſufficient puniſhment here — no need can there be for the ſhocking idea of damnation. — It is but the pillar of prieſtcraft.

By this ſoothing temptation — this Syren ſong — licentious ears grow quite raviſhed; and flattered, like *Eve*, with the inſidious promiſe of ſecurity, "Eat, and thou ſhalt not die:" they give the reins to their luſts, rebel, and in their rebellion periſh.

From this ſnare, the LORD, the horn of ſalvation, delivers his people, by giving them firmly to believe the words he has ſpoken unto them. True faith at once poſſeſſes their minds with juſt, indelible conceptions of the evil of ſin, the eſſential holineſs of GOD, and his avenging juſtice. Through this conviction, not the effect of education, or cuſtomary aſſent to the truth, but of divine teaching, they baffle theſe ſuggeſtions of Satan, as CHRIST himſelf repelled his aſſaults, with — "Thus it is *written*." By this means alſo, all the wild dreams about infirmities, temptations, *&c.* as if they would indemnify us tho' we commit iniquity, vaniſh away. Sin is known to be the poiſon of the ſoul. Conſequently a principle of ſelf-preſervation excites

us

us to ſeek deliverance from it—to take alarm at its approach, and feel painful apprehenſions when we have been overcome by ſome ſurprize, or violent aſſault.—After much experience of this kind, the underſtanding is more enlightened, GOD is more known, the nature and qualities of ſin clearly diſcovered, and its tyranny becomes hateful to the ſoul.

Where the caſe is not thus (ſuch terrors being unneceſſary with reſpect to many)—where the heart, like *Lydia*'s, is ſweetly opened to receive divine counſel, and juſt ideas of the love of GOD and CHRIST take place from the firſt awakenings—ſtill believers in him are preſerved no leſs ſecurely from the wiles of Satan, than if the ſharpeſt pangs, for fear of periſhing, had wrung the heart. Both thoſe who have ſuffered much terror, and thoſe who have felt none, are equally perſuaded, that "the wages of ſin is death"—every prohibition againſt it a tender mercy—its ſervice baſe, like the life of thieves and ruffians; and obedience to GOD in all things infinitely deſirable.

Though this knowledge does not preſerve his people from ever offending at all, yet it keeps

keeps them from ever being at peace with ſin. They groan under its firſt motions in the heart, and complain againſt themſelves for what others account no evil — it is the vexation of their lives that they are no more holy.

In this manner the ſubtilty of Satan, as a tempter, liar, ſeducer and murderer, is defeated — and the faithful are ſaved out of his hands.

The other grand artifice by which the old ſerpent at firſt erected, and ſtill upholds his empire, is by offering delicious flattery to our pride. "Ye ſhall be as Gods, knowing good "and evil," dazzled *Eve*. The towering thought of independence, an amazing exaltation, even above her high condition, caught her in Satan's ſnare. What is tantamount to this he inſinuates to her poſterity—You have powers within yourſelf, ſufficient to acquire wiſdom, to practiſe virtue, and to attain happineſs. — By induſtry in cultivating your natural faculties, moderating your paſſions, by ſelf-command and ſelf-improvement, your mind ſhall brighten inceſſantly with

new

new charms *, and you ſhall be conſcious they are all your own acquiſition. Though indeed you muſt ſtand indebted to another for your creation, you ſhall be beholden to yourſelf alone for moral excellency, and rectitude of conduct, which is the whole of man.

Away then with the ſupplicating knee, the atonement, and Interceſſor for tranſgreſſors — Away with the aids of grace, and the dictates of revelation. What are theſe but engines, uſed by knaves to maintain themſelves in affluence and authority. Be aſſured, where myſtery begins, religion ends.

Such artful ſuggeſtions of man's native dignity, the powers of reaſon, and our own ſufficiency to perform our duty, naturally captivate all, who were before ſmitten with admiration of their own underſtanding, good life, and good heart. And theſe high thoughts which exalt themſelves againſt the knowledge of God, and create implacable hatred of his truth, are aſcribed upon the beſt warrant to Satanic influence. " For if our goſpel be " hid,

* See Mr *Hume*'s Moral Eſſays, or any of the Socinian writers — who abound with this ſelf-ſufficient language.

" hid, it is hid to them that are loſt; in whom " the God of this world, hath blinded the " minds of them that believe not, leſt the " light of the glorious goſpel ſhould ſhine " unto them," 2 *Cor.* iv.

But this ſnare, ſo ſure to catch the vain and arrogant, cannot take the people of GOD — becauſe their own experience, is a living proof, ſtronger than a thouſand arguments, of the falſhood of ſuch high thoughts. They feel inconſtancy, weakneſs, ignorance, folly, defilement, and corruptions, notwithſtanding their unfeigned deſires, their fervent prayers, their watchfulneſs, ſelf-denial, and labor to become what they well know they ought to be. Light makes manifeſt. Wherefore the greater their progreſs is in copying the perfect example ſet before them, the quicker diſcernment and ſenſibility they poſſeſs of their own manifold deficiencies — Of conſequence, the nearer they approach to heaven, the deeper is the conviction, which they feel, that it is wholly owing to the free grace of GOD, the inſpiration of his Spirit, the ſacrifice of his Son, his everlaſting love, interceſſion, and immutable promiſes, that they have not already periſhed,

and

and ſhall not be condemned with the unbelieving world.

Hence whatever ſervices the LORD's people perform, whatever excellent qualities adorn them, they abhor, as ſacrilegious, the firſt riſings of ſelf-complacency. They watch with godly jealouſy, againſt their native propenſity to be great and good in their own eyes; and thus reſiſting the devil, in his capital artifice, they are ſaved out of his hands.

After this deliverance, it ſeems good unto their heavenly Father, that many of the heirs of glory ſhould ſtill feel the fiery darts of Satan, and be called to terrible conflicts with this inviſible foe. He is permitted forcibly to ſuggeſt the moſt horrid thoughts, deceiving thoſe who are aſſaulted with them, to regard them as the offspring of their own minds. In the cloſet, and at church, when they would aſcribe unto GOD the honor due to his moſt holy name, they are often violently tempted to believe there is no GOD, or to ſuſpect his word is falſhood, or to arraign his attributes. Yet theſe hideous ſuggeſtions, from the pain they cauſe, ſhew plainly from whence they come. They are like the charges

of a perjured villain againſt the innocent, which prove nothing but the malice, and daring impudence of their accuſer.

Was not the heart delivered from Satan's dominion, there would be no painful feelings, no ſighs and tears on this account. His children can hear GOD's name blaſphemed, his attributes arraigned, his being queſtioned, and be merry in the midſt of it all; if they do not join themſelves in aſſaulting the eternal throne. Wait, therefore, thou afflicted and toſſed with tempeſt, on account of theſe blaſphemous ſuggeſtions. They are permitted, like other temptations, to prove thy impotence to withſtand Satan in thy own might, to exerciſe thy faith and try thy patience. In due time thy enemy ſhall depart from thee, as he did from the great Captain of thy ſalvation, who was in this very matter tempted, as thou art, and therefore well knows how to ſympathize with thee, and to ſuccour thee. Be of good cheer — though this trial be grievous indeed, little danger is to be apprehended from this quarter, in compariſon of what we ſtand expoſed to from ſenſual appetites, from love of money, praiſe, and power.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

On the miſtake of ſuppoſing heaven will be open to all men; — and of ſome native power in men to ſave themſelves.

THIS account from ſcripture, of the cruel artifices of Satan, proves two dangerous miſtakes, often vehemently propagated, under the notion of much more rational religion than ancient Chriſtianity; and with high pretenſions indeed of being *liberal*, in oppoſition to it. Many of theſe liberal gentlemen affirm, that heaven is open to all men. Others, who have not *yet* got quite ſo far, teach, that without the blood of CHRIST, and the Spirit of grace, men can redeem themſelves by their own repentance, after they have been very wicked; — and when they have not, may reſt aſſured of ſalvation from the mercy of GOD, by making themſelves, through their own moral character, the objects of his delight. Yet the firſt of theſe opinions is as old as the fall, and has ever been a main pillar of Sa-

tan's empire. Stronger poſſeſſion in our minds, than it naturally gives him, he cannot deſire — becauſe when once we are ſo deluded as to believe heaven is open to all men, the difference between good and evil inſtantly becomes too dim to be ſeen by *natural* men in an hour of temptation, or at leaſt too little intereſting. Why ſhould they ſacrifice a favorite paſſion, loſe, or ſuffer for conſcience ſake, they will ſay, when they may indulge, and be ſafe? Need I produce any other proof, that the notion of a mercy in GOD, which diſpenſes with faith and holineſs, is a device of Satan's, his enemy, and ours? Beware therefore of all pleaders for the impunity of the diſobedient, or their ſalvation who die in their ſins. Sooner eſteem thoſe friends to ſociety, who would aboliſh the penalties of the law, the priſons of juſtice, and the ſword of the magiſtrate; than thoſe who ſay, or inſinuate, there is not in GOD an everlaſting antipathy to all evil, and an unchangeable purpoſe to turn all the wicked into hell. Did only fallible teachers aſſert the avenging juſtice of the ſupreme governor of the world, this miſtake would not be ſo flagrant. But ponder and weigh the truth. All thoſe holy

prophets,

prophets, by whoſe mouth GOD ſpake from the beginning of the world, who denounced his deſolating judgments upon *Babylon*, *Tyre*, and *Nineveh* of old — upon the unbelieving Jews, their devoted city, country, and poſterity, foretelling their preſent unexampled condition, ſixteen hundred years before the event: —Theſe men of GOD, *all* of them warn the diſobedient of approaching vengeance, if they will go on ſtill in their wickedneſs. — The moſt compaſſionate JESUS utters that ſolemn exhortation, "Enter ye in at the ſtrait gate; "for wide is the gate, and broad is the way "that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there "be who go in thereat." — He immediately adds — "Beware of falſe prophets (or teach-"ers) who come to you in ſheeps cloathing," meek, mild and gentle, teaching no ſuch ſhocking doctrine, as that few will be ſaved, and many periſh; — "for inwardly they are "ravening wolves," greedily bent on ſerving their own bellies: — "Ye ſhall know them by "their fruits." — CHRIST's apoſtles after him declare, that "there is a reſurrection of the "unjuſt to damnation." — All theſe witneſſes agree in affirming the perdition of the ungodly, in words ſo very plain, that no ſerious

Chriſtian ever queſtioned their meaning puniſhment inſupportable. —When theſe things are ſo, what a fatal miſtake muſt it be to depend upon a mere notion, a *wiſh* of your own, a wiſh, the vile offspring of infidelity and love of ſin; in contradiction to ſuch abounding evidence, and infallible teſtimonies of the wrath of GOD revealed from heaven againſt all workers of iniquity? Be aſſured, the ſcripture can no more be broken, than GOD himſelf can ceaſe to reign. All the evil, as well as all the good, which is therein foretold, muſt be accompliſhed upon its reſpective object. But ſhould unbelieving, impenitent men eſcape their threatened doom, dying in that character, the ſcripture would be proved falſe, no leſs, than if after all the promiſes of his incarnation, the horn of ſalvation had never been raiſed up; —for that moſt glorious event is not more plainly foretold, than the perdition of the ungodly world.

Away then with the cruel ſoothing error, that the mercy of GOD can ſave us without faith in CHRIST, and without holineſs. Thoſe alone are, or can be bleſſed, whom the mouth of the holy prophets, apoſtles, and CHRIST himſelf, pronounces bleſſed. Never, therefore,

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in wisdom and prudence ought we to conclude ourselves safe, till *their* testimony is full and clear, that there is now no condemnation against us.

The other fatal mistake, that men can redeem themselves by repentance, acquire virtue by their own native power, and gain a blissful immortality in contempt of the atonement, and the Spirit of CHRIST, is a chief pillar also of Satan's throne; — because such notions make men seem independent of GOD. For though it be *humbly* granted, that they did not create themselves, yet if they want, after they are created, no more the help of GOD to practice virtue, than the finished vessel wants the shipwright's aid to sail, how can they be more self-sufficient? And if after sinning against the majesty of GOD, his mercy, like a pardon from earthly sovereigns, without any atonement, will admit us into heaven, how trifling must our offences seem, since it is enough to be sorry for them, and repeat them no more? What will not at all satisfy for a capital misdemeanor, in any nation under heaven, and was it proposed as sufficient, would be rejected with disdain, is yet, upon this self-exalting scheme, all that GOD requires when

his law is broken, and his honor trampled under foot. It is a moſt alarming queſtion — "If "any man ſin againſt another, the judge ſhall "judge him; but if a man ſin againſt the "LORD, who ſhall intreat for him?" But upon this ſcheme we may reply, no body need intreat at all: — It is enough the ſinner condemns himſelf, and for the time to come will do better. Preſumption is the child of ſelf-ſufficiency; —wherefore, if we can repent when we will, and by repentance redeem ourſelves, and put off beloved luſts when we pleaſe — if all this is in our power, and not in the will GOD, whether he will give us his grace to repent, believe and be ſaved; — if this be true, we may reaſonably preſume, that let our condition be ever ſo bad, all things neceſſary for our ſafety, may be done juſt as ſuits our humor. Thus ſhall we be led on to imagine, a more convenient time will come, when we ſhall live that good life, which without the Spirit of GOD, and without CHRIST, ſhall prove our ſure paſſport to heaven, till death ſeizes us in our ſins. Stand therefore ever upon your guard againſt all thoſe arrogant deceivers, who ſpeak great ſwelling words of the power of man to redeem himſelf, to perform duty, or gain heaven, independent of

CHRIST'S

CHRIST's ſacrifice, and the influence of the Spirit. This is no more than Satan's old artful addreſs from the beginning ("ye ſhall be "as gods") though now vamped up anew, and publiſhed under the name of rational, liberal religion. It is an infernal device to hide our great weakneſs and guilt; — making us of courſe deſpiſe the heaven-appointed remedy to ſave from both, even whilſt we profeſs ſome ſort of faith in the ſcripture.

CHAP. XII.

CHRIST *the deliverer of his church from the men of this world.*

A Third enemy, from whom the LORD, the horn of ſalvation, delivers his people, is the world — the world of unreaſonable and wicked men, who have not faith. Perſons of this character, making up the vaſt majority, in every place, age, and condition of life, are called on this account, as they call themſelves with an air of importance — the *world*. *Their friendſhip*, we are taught, "is "enmity

" enmity againſt GOD; and whoſoever will " be a friend of the world, is the enemy of " GOD," *James* iv. 4. So irreconcileable is the oppoſition between them. Yet who can bear to be ſingular? or forbear to imitate the multitude? Who can ſubdue the love of praiſe, or the more violent fear of ſhame? Who dare oppoſe the chiefs of the earth? Does not grandeur, power, wealth, or reputed wiſdom, keep all in awe around them? Who dare be more religious than the great, the rich, the wiſe, chooſe men ſhould be? Add to this, that in general, men of the world are the very perſons we from infancy have been trained up to revere, in youth been glad to imitate, and afterwards owed them great deference, if we do not ſtill remain dependent upon their favor.

Conſider the *world* in this cloſe connection, and you will eaſily perceive the ground of that ſpirited queſtion—" Who is he that overcom- " eth the world?" Is it the man of reaſon and philoſophy, who ſcorns all vulgar prejudices? or the man whom wealth has rendered independent; or nobility of birth taught to look down on others, as made only to ſerve his pleaſure? No — not one of theſe is delivered

livered from a daſtardly fear of the faces of men. Not one of them is bold enough to perform his duty, in defiance of ridicule and contempt.—" Who is he that overcometh the " world, but he that believeth that JESUS is " the CHRIST? Whatſoever is born of GOD, " overcometh the world." This victory is derived from CHRIST's triumph, and from the performance of his promiſe. — " In the " world ye ſhall have tribulation; but be of " good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The way in which the LORD makes his people conquerors in this combat, is the ſame in all ages and places. He convinces them of the impious abſurdity of valuing the favor of men, more than of GOD; — of fearing momentary reproach from vile, ſinful worms, and not fearing everlaſting contempt from the Son of man, and all his holy angels. They are led alſo to look upon their beſt friend, their Savior and their GOD, covered with ſhame and ſpittle for their ſakes; and at that ſight they feel hatred of all ſelfiſhneſs and cowardice, which would otherwiſe prevail over them. — They are taught alſo to underſtand the ſpirit of the world, — that they will call themſelves Chriſtians, yet plead cuſtom and faſhion againſt the

plain commands of CHRIST, in whoſe name they have no lively hope—in whoſe croſs they ſee no glory: whom they fear not to offend, nor delight to obey;—yet are very angry others ſhould pay him more reſpect than they do themſelves. This diſcovery not only juſtifies contention with the world, but demonſtrates no man can be CHRIST's diſciple, except he come out from them, and be ſeparate.

Above all, the LORD gives his people his own peace,—a pleaſing powerful proof of the wiſdom of their conduct, and its excellency. Covered with this armor of light, and enriched with this inviſible treaſure, ſneers from the profane, pity from the formal, abuſe from the paſſionate, and perſecution from the bruti ſh, are all endured by them with calmneſs, and faced with intrepidity. "Thou ſhalt "hide them in the ſecret of thy preſence "from the pride of man:—Thou ſhalt keep "them ſecretly in a pavilion, from the ſtrife "of tongues," *Pſalm* xxxi. 20.

This deliverance of the church from the world, her enemy, expoſes the *miſtake* that we may be *good enough*, without giving offence by our religion. It is impoſſible;—for to be a Chriſtian,

Chriſtian, is to have "the ſame mind in you, "which was in CHRIST JESUS." But to reſemble him is to become obnoxious; — for who, under the power of natural pride, can bear to ſee their favorite purſuits deſpiſed, their boaſted virtues ſlighted, and all the ground of their hope towards GOD, regarded as a deluſion? —Yet this very treatment of its pleaſures, virtues, and religion, the world muſt receive from you, if you follow the example, or obey the commands of CHRIST.

Though your mouth were never to be opened in reproof, or vindication of the truth, your conduct ſpeaks aloud: — of courſe, the nearer your connection is with perſons conformed to the world (however good they may be deemed) the more provoking muſt you prove to them from your principles and practice. This will certainly be the effect of true faith — for the declaration is peremptory and univerſal, — *All who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus, ſhall ſuffer perſecution*, 2 Tim. iii. 12.

The ſubſtantial, unchangeable ground of this offence, is given at full length, with great force in the ancient book of *Wiſdom*: — "Let "us lie in wait for the righteous, becauſe he

"is

" is not for our turn. He is clean contrary " to our doings. He upbraideth us with " offending the law, and objecteth, to our " infamy, the tranſgreſſings of our educa- " tion. He profeſſeth to have the *knowledge* " of GOD. He is made to reprove our thoughts. " He is grievous unto us even to behold; for " his life is not like other men's, his ways " are of another faſhion. We are eſteemed " of him as counterfeits. He abſtaineth from " our ways, as from filthineſs. He pro- " nounceth the end of the juſt to be bleſſed, " and maketh his boaſt, that GOD is his Fa- " ther," *Wiſd. Sol.* ii. 12.

In this paſſage the reaſons are ſtrongly marked, why the LORD's people always are hated and deſpiſed; — for the world charges them with intolerable preciſeneſs of behavior, affected ſingularity, great uncharitableneſs in judging others, ſpiritual pride, blaſphemous preſumption in maintaining the knowledge of forgiveneſs from GOD, with an oſtentation of being his favorites.

Renounce, therefore, the vain thought of being a Chriſtian in ſpirit and in truth, without giving offence to the world. Renounce a ſelfiſh,

ſelfiſh, cowardly regard to character, which would deceive you to fancy you may live in all ſubjection to GOD, yet eſcape the cenſure of the careleſs, and the hatred of the formal. Remember the ſayings of the LORD are eternal truths: — "Marvel not if the world hate "you; it hated me, before it hated you. — If "ye were of the world, the world would "love his own: — but becauſe you are not "of the world, but I have choſen you out "of the world, therefore the world hateth "you." Is not this proof of your relation to CHRIST, infinitely better than all the eſteem, applauſe, or preferment which can be gained by ſuch moderation in religion, as will offend no one?

CHAP. XIII.

On courting the favor of the world.

THIS doctrine of the deliverance of the church by the horn of ſalvation, from her enemy, the world, proves the miſtake of fancying our uſefulneſs depends upon the eſteem

eſteem and favor of thoſe around us. Above all things avoid the name of an enthuſiaſt, ſay many grave perſons; and beware of giving offence, for this will ruin your character, and take away all your influence. To keep clear of real enthuſiaſm is highly neceſſary, becauſe it leads to the greateſt miſchiefs, by pleading private impulſes and revelations, to warrant practices, principles, or actions, contrary to ſcripture. It is itſelf a ſpecies of infidelity, and often ends in avowed rejection of the Bible. But the world having always an averſion to the power of godlineſs, will brand the faithful ſervants of CHRIST, with this odious imputation. Neceſſary zeal for his truth, in oppoſition to damnable hereſies, ſober ſingularity and ſelf-denial, "without which, no "man ſhall ſee the LORD," is being righteous overmuch, and gives great offence. The glorious privileges alſo of the church, I mean the conſolations of CHRIST, the comforts of love, and the fellowſhip of the Holy Ghoſt, are in the judgment of the world, rank enthuſiaſm. Though theſe privileges are ſpecified in the grand charter of the church, have been conſtantly implored in her public worſhip through all ages, and atteſted by the moſt

moſt venerable witneſſes; yet no reputation for learning, or wiſdom, or ſteadineſs of conduct, can ſecure men from the charge of *Enthuſiaſm*, whenever they boldly aſſert theſe great points.

Muſt neceſſary zeal then for for the truth of God, ſober ſingularity, with the great privileges of the Chriſtian church, be diſowned or neglected for fear of loſing our character, or doing leſs good? If ſo, uſefulneſs depends no longer on real excellency, or the energy of grace, but on the good opinion which the world and Satan are pleaſed to entertain of us.

O ſhameful deceit to impoſe as it notoriouſly does upon ſo many grave people! How is it, that the nature of things, ſcripture, and matter of fact do not convince men, that they cannot ſerve the immortal intereſts of their fellow-creatures, till they are diſguſting to the world? For who are the world, but a vaſt multitude, encouraging each other to deſpiſe Chriſtian ſelf-denial and communion with God, for the ſake of pleaſure, wealth and power? Now what leſs than avowed abhorrence of ſo baſe a conduct to-

towards our Maker, can ever bring such persons to feel? Habitual intercourse with them in idleness and dissipation, to preserve a character; or polite silence in their company, whilst they deride the power of godliness, or the doctrines of scripture, or talk every one vanity with his neighbour, must keep them in countenance, and in ignorance too. But an open defence of the great things revealed to us: an intimacy with persons eminent for their godly zeal, adorned by a holy conversation, reproves the careless conformists to the fashion of the times. This is to act like a good soldier of JESUS CHRIST, and prove in the highest degree a friend to man. And if such irreconcileable opposition subsists between GOD and the world, that the latter is the enemy of the former, nothing less than total opposition to their ways, can make this manifest, and prove the means of rescuing some from perdition. In other words, to do good to the souls of men, we must live so conformably to the Christian rule, as to give offence to the world, and provoke them to abuse us in some measure.

Hence the church of CHRIST is addressed in the following tender terms:

"I be-

" I beſeech you by the mercies of GOD, " that ye preſent your bodies a living ſacri- " fice, holy, acceptable unto GOD, which is " your reaſonable ſervice," *Rom.* xii.

Yet moſt reaſonable as this oblation is, the holy Ghoſt well knew, how oppoſite it muſt be to the cuſtom of every age. The apoſtle therefore immediately adds, " And be not " conformed to this world, but be ye trans- " formed by the renewing of your minds," *Rom.* xii.

With theſe ſtrong evidences, matter of fact concurs to prove the groſs miſtake of making compliances with the world, in order *to do good* in it. For who ſhine brighteſt for their extenſive uſefulneſs in enlarging the kingdom of GOD, and adding to it many ſouls? Were they *prudent* men, afraid of offending the rich, the grave, or learned? No, they drew the ſword, and threw away the ſcabbard. They came forth to ſhew men their tranſgreſſions, without reſpect to perſons, or regard to conſequences. From the death of the abhorred Nazarene, their ever-bleſſed LORD, to this hour, the moſt diligent copiers of his example, have been moſt offenſive;—ſo ſcan-

dalous, that many who believed them to be in the right, and wiſhed to be perſonally acquainted with them, dared not. Though guilty of no evil practice, nor tinctured with real enthuſiaſm, their heaven-born love for CHRIST, troubled the world, and galled them to revenge, in cruelly, diſdainfully, and deſpitefully ſpeaking againſt the righteous.

Inſtead of ſtudying then to gain the world's eſteem, we are commanded to "take for an ex-"ample of ſuffering affliction, the prophets, "who have ſpoken in the name of the LORD:" who, though accounted by ſome knaves, by others fools, by more madmen, have brought thouſands to glory, the eternal proofs of their ineſtimable uſefulneſs.

When will the prudent conformiſts to the faſhion of the times, let us ſee ſuch ſucceſs from their compliances? When ſhall we behold them honored with the higheſt honor men can receive, a company of immortal ſouls, by them converted from the error of their ways? No, to be uſeful either as Chriſtians, or as Chriſtian miniſters, we muſt copy the labor and zeal of thoſe, whom the world could never endure. Give over then fearing any thing,

thing, but hypocriſy before GOD, and cowardice in his cauſe before men. Deſire nothing, but to live the life of a Chriſtian. Halt no more between GOD and the world. If the ſpirit of the world, pride, careleſsneſs reſpecting the ſoul, and neglect of CHRIST, be not hateful to GOD, and deſtructive to men, the Goſpel (with reverence I ſpeak it) is an impoſition. Do you abhor that thought as blaſphemy? Abhor as much a fawning upon CHRIST from year to year in your cloſet, calling Him there your LORD and GOD, and then coming out to conſult the world, how far they will allow you to obey his plain commands, without ſaying you are a Methodiſt. Ceaſe rather to profeſs any allegiance to CHRIST, than treat Him, under profeſſions of duty, with ſuch contempt. "I would," ſaith He to the church of *Laodicea*, "thou wert hot or cold; but becauſe "thou art lukewarm, I will ſpue thee out of "my mouth."

CHAP. XIV.

CHRIST *the deliverer of his people from the love of the World.*

BY the World, the inſpired writers underſtand, not only the ungodly part of its inhabitants, but ſenſual pleaſures, honor, riches and power: Theſe, the beloved diſciple calls, "the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of "the eye, and the pride of life." To gain a large proportion of what can gratify us in each, is naturally our ſtrongeſt deſire, and the ſource of endleſs conteſts amongſt men. Indeed, till we are created anew in CHRIST JESUS, theſe things carry away our thoughts, and captivate our affections, as if they were our chief good; and in order to poſſeſs them, we throw ourſelves headlong into deſtruction. But when objects infinitely better are brought before our view, money, ſtate, and ſenſual indulgencies, loſe their bewitching charms, as toys which raviſh children, become our contempt in riper years. Thus by the diſcovery and enjoyment of things more excellent, not

by

by ſtoical diſdain, or monkiſh ſelf-denial, Chriſtians overcome the world. The grace of GOD, by bringing ſalvation to the ſoul, teaches them to deny worldly luſts. "We "all," (ſays the apoſtle, deſcribing the faith of the church and its effect) "beholding as "in a glaſs, the *glory* of the LORD, are "changed into the ſame image from glory "to glory, even as by the Spirit of the "LORD," 2 *Cor.* iii.

From hence appears the dangerous miſtake of fancying we belong to CHRIST, though worldly luſts ſtill hold dominion over us. Yet how prone are we thus to deceive ourſelves! We "were once darkneſs, many will ſay, but "now are we light in the LORD." All preaching for a courſe of years was the ſame to us, we received no benefit from it. But now we know the doctrines of grace; we delight to attend where they are diſplayed, and indeed can bear no other divinity. Does not this ſufficiently prove, that we are the people of GOD?

I anſwer, this is no proof the World is conquered, or our minds renewed. We may ſay and do this, yet be greedy, like *Judas*, of

filthy lucre, and as hard-hearted to the cry of the poor — thirſt after worldly honors, indulge childiſh fondneſs for dreſs and diverſions, be in love with pomp, and even vex every one about us by our evil tempers. All this may be ſaid, and done, yet our delight be only in ſenſual pleaſures, our hearts elevated by worldly ſucceſſes, or depreſſed by worldly fears alone, and we differ in nothing from ſcoffers who walk after their own luſts, but violent zeal for certain articles of the Chriſtian faith, which in corrupt minds do much harm.

Do we then profeſs faith, and mean not to impoſe upon others, or deceive ourſelves? Our victory over worldly luſts, muſt be the indiſputable proof, that we partake of redemption. The excellency of our religious principles muſt ſhine in our buſineſs and ſtation. Our ſpirit muſt not only be above roguery or fraud, but above covetouſneſs alſo, and eagerneſs to get gain. And if wealth and affluence be our lot, we muſt conquer the enchantments of earthly and ſenſual gratifications. For without this ſubſtantial fruit of divine knowledge, zeal for doctrines is but a burning fever, not the genial warmth which

flows

flows from the love of GOD: — devotion is ſuperſtition, not the worſhip of Him in ſpirit, and in truth.

What ſo much emboldens revilers of the doctrines of grace? Profeſſors, whoſe covetouſneſs and treachery, marked with demure appearance and religious talk, evidently render it unſafe to truſt them. Who from a wicked imagination that the election of grace is their ſanctuary, and the righteouſneſs of CHRIST their robe of ſalvation, conclude that deadly thing, Sin, can do no hurt to their ſouls. Did not the ſcripture affirm there muſt be ſuch offences, and were there not many whoſe Chriſtian life and doctrine perfectly accord, we ſhould be almoſt aſhamed of the Goſpel itſelf, from the ſcandalous ſelfiſhneſs of numbers who profeſs it. And though the only lawful concluſion from ſuch melancholy inſtacces is, that "If any man "ſay I know Him, and keep not his com-"mandments, he is a liar, and the truth is "not in him;" yet theſe falſe profeſſors will be loudly urged by the enemies of the truth, to make it odious.

O ye

O ye ſelf-deceived profeſſors, enſlaved by worldly luſts, hear this, and tremble, and turn from your evil ways.—Ye are anſwerable for all theſe ſad conſequences before GOD—anſwerable for ſtrengthening their hands who revile CHRIST—for aiding them to ſeduce others into their wicked errors—for fixing them in contempt of what GOD has revealed. And to imagine you can be members of CHRIST, and ſafe in Him, whilſt your conduct lays a ſtumbling-block in the way of the Goſpel, is an infatuation one would not believe poſſible, was it not often ſeen.

The terrible doom awaiting thoſe, who perſiſt to the laſt in ſuch a miſtake, is awfully denounced. "Wo unto the world, becauſe "of offences, (at which they catch, and plead "to their own undoing;) for it muſt needs be "that offences come; but wo to that man by "whom the offence cometh: it were better "for him that a millſtone was hanged about "his neck, and he caſt into the ſea."

CHAP.

CHAP. XV.

On the natural depravity of Man.

ANOTHER enemy into whoſe hands we are fallen, is generally called in ſcripture, the *Fleſh*: a word uſed to expreſs the debaſed corrupt ſtate of our nature, which in its actings and tendency, is perfectly contrary to the law and holy nature of GOD. And this is called *fleſh*, becauſe a corrupt and ſinful nature is what properly belongs to mankind, *to all fleſh*, as they are in themſelves. For man's nature, forſaken of divine and holy principles, of itſelf became exceedingly corrupt, and utterly depraved. See what deteſtable deeds! See what infernal tempers are the works of the fleſh! "Adultery, fornication, uncleanneſs, laſciviouſneſs, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, ſtrife, ſedition, hereſies, envy, murder, drunkenneſs, revellings, and ſuch like," *Gal.* v. 21.

Every one of theſe wickedneſſes, if left to ourſelves in an hour of temptation, we are capable

capable of committing. The charge of ſuch total depravity of nature, muſt be denied and highly reſented by creatures ſo corrupt. We could not be ſo vile, as GOD declares we are become by the fall, were we naturally diſpoſed to plead guilty to this charge. For pride, one great part of our diſeaſe, ſo intoxicates, that many who are a curſe to ſociety, by their evil example, are far from holding a mean opinion of their own goodneſs. Hence it ſhould not ſurprize us to find the violent aſſertors of man's native innocence, amongſt the licentious in principles or practice.

In order to prove we are in the hands of this enemy, a debaſed, corrupt nature, I ſhall produce the concurrent teſtimony of the word of GOD, with the confeſſed condition of every man living, even of thoſe who have diligently uſed all poſſible means to extirpate this corruption.

Clear and full, in proof of innate corruption, are the words of *Job*. It ſeemed hard to him, that he muſt be ſingled out, as it were, to ſuffer ſuch extremity of affliction, though a ſinner, ſince he was ſo from his birth. He

urges

urges therefore his complaint in that affecting queſtion, " Who can bring a clean thing, " out of an unclean? Not one," *Job* xiv. This aſſertion is of more weight, becauſe *Job* is not here comparing men with angels, but ſimply ſpeaking of his condition, as born of a woman, born to trouble, becauſe born in ſin.

This ancient teſtimony *David*, himſelf an amazing inſtance of the force of innate depravity, confirms. For, to the conſternation of all his pious ſubjects, the joy of his profane ones, and the aſtoniſhment of all ſucceeding ages, *David* commits adultery, and then murder, to conceal his great offence.

Such enormous wickedneſs done by one diſtinguiſhed for his knowledge and love of God, loudly calls upon the moſt advanced Chriſtians to take heed leſt they fall. When this backſlider, (a moſt conſpicuous monument of the free grace of God) is recovered, he delineates, as an inſpired penman, all the workings of a broken and contrite ſpirit, in his penitential Pſalm. And here we are taught, that one reaſon why he was ſuffered to plunge into ſuch an abyſs of ſin, was, that his fall might ſtand on record, a demonſtration of the

the juſtice of GOD's charge of innate depravity upon the children of men. "Againſt "Thee only have I ſinned, and done this "evil in thy ſight, that thou mighteſt be "juſtified in thy ſaying, (or in this ſaying of "thine) Behold, I was ſhapen in iniquity, "and in ſin did my mother conceive me," *Pſalm* li. And if *David* was thus ſhapen and conceived, the whole human race, naturally engendered, muſt be ſo too.

This poſitive aſſertion of the inſpired father, *Solomon* his ſon, affirms again in the ſtrongeſt manner poſſible, after recovering alſo from the moſt ſhameful practice of idolatry for many years.

"The heart of the ſons of men is full of "evil, and madneſs is in their heart whilſt "they live, and after that they go down "to the dead," *Eccles.* ix. 3.

Obſerve, *Solomon* does not ſay the *heart* of this or that ſinner, but of the whole offſpring of *Adam*. He uſes the word alſo in the ſingular number, becauſe "as face anſwers to "face in the water, ſo do the hearts of the "children of men." This one heart of the whole human race is *full* of evil. The word, here

here tranſlated *full*, ſignifies as full as a thing can hold, being uſed to expreſs the fullneſs of an overflowing river, and of the wind when it blows a hurricane. The word tranſlated *evil*, denotes what is miſchievous and pernicious — to others miſchievous, to the man himſelf pernicious. How could the inſpired writer more forcibly affirm the corruption of man's native inclinations?

The ſecond clauſe aſſerts the exceſs and obſtinacy of this inbred depravity. *And madneſs* (the *Hebrew* is plural) *is in their heart* — They deſire, purpoſe, chooſe, and act, with reſpect to GOD and their own eternal intereſt, like perſons perfectly inſane, *whilſt they live* in their natural ſtate. No promiſes or threatenings, judgments or mercies from GOD; no advantages which obedience to him procures; no miſeries ſpringing from the indulgence of vile affections, produce in them any change. — Sinners an hundred years old, are full of phrenzy as in their youth, and *then*, if left to themſelves, in this condition *they go down to the dead* — into a miſerable eternity.

Thus the holy Ghoſt, by *David*, affirms the birth of man is in a depraved condition; by *Solomon*,

Solomon, that during the whole time of his abode here, he is altogether evil, and his exit dreadful beyond imagination, if left to himself.

The same doctrine was taught by CHRIST, no less plainly when he was upon earth, than by his prophets before his appearance. "That "which is born of the flesh is flesh," saith the LORD, "and that which is born of the "spirit, is spirit. Marvel not that I said "unto thee, Ye must be born again," *John* iii.

Flesh in this sentence, is directly opposed to the renewing sanctifying influences of the holy Spirit. But that only which in its nature is sinful, can in its nature be opposite to the Spirit of GOD. Wherever therefore in the Bible the flesh is opposed to the Spirit of grace, the word can mean nothing else, but sinful corruption. Therefore to be born flesh, of flesh, is to be the corrupt offspring of corrupt degenerate parents, so as to need renewing grace from the Spirit of GOD on that account, even from our birth.

With these scripture proofs (and many more equally strong might be adduced) the condition of the human race, manifestly agrees.

"Since

" Since it is not owing," (as that incomparable reaſoner Mr Profeſſor *Edwards* argues) " to any external circumſtances peculiarly " prevalent, which lead men to commit ſin. " But ſin is chargeable, according to univer- " ſal experience, on perſons of all conſtitu- " tions, capacities, conditions, manners, opi- " nions, and educations; in all countries, cli- " mates, nations, and ages. Hence there is " the ſame evidence, that this propenſity to " ſin, is in the *very nature* of the ſubject, as " we have in any other caſe whatever: which " is wholly from obſerving the effect is the " ſame in all changes of time, and place, and " under every variety of circumſtances. It " is in this way only, that we know there is " any propenſity at all ſeated in the nature " of man. And that we judge right, in im- " puting this depravity to nature, and not " to cuſtom or bad example, appears plainly " from the manner in which GOD ſpeaks of " the firſt, or natural ſtate of man. There " is not the leaſt difference made between " one or another — All are loſt — All are " concluded under ſin — All are enemies to

" GOD — the whole world is become guilty " before him †."

Whatever difficulties therefore above our preſent ſolution attend the doctrine of innate depravity, both ſcripture teſtimony, and the univerſal condition of mankind, demonſtrate the truth of it.

With theſe proofs, another of equal force may be joined; I mean, the power of indwelling ſin, after diligent trial for many years of every poſſible method to root it out. Thouſands in the church of CHRIST have made the experiment, yet not one of them ever ſucceeded. After the example of *David* and *Daniel*,

† See the Reverend Mr Profeſſor *Edwards*'s Book, publiſhed by *Keith*, intitled, *A full Proof and Defence of the great Chriſtian Doctrine of Original Sin, in Anſwer to Dr John Taylor's Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin.* This performance, the firſt in the world, without doubt, upon the ſubject, whether you conſider the force of argument, or the ſpirit of the writer, has been publiſhed ſeven years in *England*. The aſſertors of man's native innocence have made (as far as I can learn) no reply to it. If they can, the credit of their cauſe calls aloud upon them to confute his arguings. If they cannot, they ought at leaſt to ceaſe from vaunting, and no more call Original Sin, Original Nonſenſe.

Daniel, they have prayed inſtantly at evening, morning, and noon-day; have watched, faſted, and given moſt liberally to the poor. Their ſouls have panted for full conformity to the law of GOD, knowing it to be "holy, juſt, "and good." Their converſation has been an honor to the Goſpel, a bleſſing to their friends, an example to all. Whatever wrong practices they were drawn into by cuſtom, they could eaſily renounce, and ſhake off every evil habit. But ſtill the plague of their own hearts remained. "They found a law, that "when they would do good, evil was pre-"ſent with them; for they delighted in the "law of GOD, after the inward man. But "they ſaw another law in their members, "warring againſt the law of their mind, and "bringing them into captivity to the law of "ſin which was in their members." For after all the pains which ever were or can be taken, "there is not a juſt man upon earth, "that doeth good, and ſinneth not," *Eccleſ.* vii. 20.

Hence perſons of exact judgment, and diſtinguiſhed excellency, have daily confeſſed their ſins, according to our LORD's injunction, and deplored their defilement to the laſt.

Who ever knew one ſingle exception to the following obſervation, that the more pains men take to do their duty, the more cauſe they find to lament their ſad deficiencies? The more intenſely they apply themſelves to follow after holineſs, the more clearly they perceive their own vileneſs. As dabblers in natural philoſophy grow conceited of their knowledge, when a *Bacon* or *Newton* lament their ignorance; ſo idle ſuperficial Chriſtians, feel no depravity within, when St *Paul*, when all "who hunger and thirſt after righteouſ-"neſs," groan under the burden of the fleſh, and feel themſelves wretched, from their depravity before GOD.

Now what was never extirpated by the moſt diligent uſe of the beſt means, properly applied for a great length of time, it is evident muſt run in the blood, muſt be interwoven in the very frame of man.

Our combat therefore with this enemy, the Fleſh, as with Satan and the World, muſt continue till we die. Yet the LORD, the horn of ſalvation, delivers his people from the dominion of their evil nature, on this ſide the grave, and from its infection, when He takes them

them to himſelf. " For ſo many as are led " by the Spirit of GOD, they are the ſons of " GOD. And if any man have not the Spirit " of CHRIST, he is none of his," *Rom.* viii. This almighty Agent " crucifies the fleſh, with " the affections and luſts. His fruit is in all " goodneſs, righteouſneſs, and truth;"—*i. e.* in a general habitual obedience to GOD, tho' never without defect or pollution. The fruit of the Spirit, is " love, joy, peace, long-ſuffer- " ing, gentleneſs, goodneſs, faith, meekneſs, " temperance:" not one, or ſome of theſe graces without the reſt, but all of them growing together, a beautiful cluſter upon the living vine.

So that no one led by the Spirit, can indulge in any ſin, or allow himſelf to neglect any duty, by pleading the force of natural depravity; becauſe ſupernatural aid is promiſed, and victorioufly exerted in their behalf, who ſeek it, to make them " holy in all " manner of converſation."

In this condition, the people of GOD remain. The beſt of them defiled with ſin, whilſt in the body, yet all of them obedient to the will of heaven, till at length they are

called to join " the ſpirits of juſt men made " perfect." Though they go on their way, therefore, mourning for ſin, and each finds abundant cauſe to cry out, " O wretched man " that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the " body of this death?" Still each may rejoice alſo in full aſſurance of final victory, ſaying, " I thank GOD, through JESUS CHRIST " our Lord."

CHAP. XVI.

Self-complacency from good reputation expoſed.

THE ſcripture doctrine of man's innate depravity, proves the common miſtake of ſuppoſing thoſe who are free from all vice, cannot be under the wrath of GOD. It is hard to condemn ourſelves as vile, when relations, friends, and neighbours, eſteem us highly. In ſuch a caſe, Can there be any reaſon, we are wont to ſay, for looking up with earneſt ſupplication to the crucified JESUS,

JESUS, as *loſt ſinners?* Self-abaſement to this degree may become felons and harlots, the diſſolute or infamous, but is it neceſſary in perſons of good reputation from their youth up? Undoubtedly; — for what avails the ſepulchres appearing beautiful without, when within there is all uncleanneſs? If it was not ſo, would an indictment from heaven concluding all under ſin, be brought againſt us? Is not this of itſelf, full proof of our *great wickedneſs*, however we may be accounted excellent before men? Shall not our Judge be believed in his declaration, "that whatſo-"ever is born of the fleſh, is fleſh," ſinful and corrupt: and his apoſtle in that very alarming aſſertion, "So then, they that are "in the fleſh, cannot pleaſe GOD?"— Muſt diſobedience to parents, or baſe lying; open lewdneſs, or ſcandalous diſhoneſty, be chargeable upon us, before we are to condemn ourſelves as vile, or confeſs we are "in "danger of hell-fire?" One of the moſt diſtinguiſhed amongſt the ſaints of GOD made a quite different eſtimate of himſelf, which ſtands recorded, to confront all who overrate their good reputation: I mean, the Baptiſt. From his mother's womb, he was full of the holy Ghoſt. The abandoned *Herod* ſtood

in awe of him; EMMANUEL himſelf atteſted, "he was a burning and a ſhining light." If any perſon, then, might have alledged, "I am innocent, therefore I need no fountain to cleanſe me from my ſin:" If any perſon could have reaſon to think, he did not deſerve eternal death for his guilt, this was the man. But what does *John* think of himſelf? Behold it, O ye innocent world, and bluſh for ſhame. Behold it, and ceaſe to utter error againſt the LORD to your own deſtruction. When JESUS comes to be baptized of him, with what humble amazement, does he firſt decline the ſacred ſervice, and then cry out from a deep ſenſe of his own defilement, "I "have need to be baptized of thee, and comeſt "thou to me?" But he could have no need to be baptized, or waſhed in the blood of the Lamb, if the beſt obedience, even from childhood, could have made him innocent; if repentance be the only condition of acceptance with GOD, or if the conſequence of ſin, be not eternal death, without the Atonement.

Does ſuch a one as the Baptiſt cry out, "I have need to be baptized of thee," What ought we to think of our own character? How little, how poor is our ſuppoſed goodneſs,

neſs, and fair reputation, when compared with his bright example! Let us keep better company than the world. Let us obſerve the ſaints of GOD, and weigh well the import of their expreſſions, when they ſpeak of themſelves before Him. This will ſoon convince us, that every man in his beſt eſtate deſerves the curſe of the law, from which nothing can ſave him, but infinite grace through the Atonement; the benefit of which belongs to thoſe only, who confeſs from the heart, that their ſin can no other way be cancelled.

CHAP. XVII.

The inſufficiency of external Religion expoſed.

THIS doctrine, that we are all born after the fleſh, and have naturally a fountain of evil within, proves the miſtake of truſting in the mere performance of religious duties.

Many very devout people aſk, with an air of confidence, "What more can we do? We conſtantly ſay our prayers, go to church, receive

ceive the ſacrament, do no harm, and give alms. Are not we good Chriſtians?" I reply, the grand point is, from what motive, and with what end are theſe things done? Prayers, which are merely the effect of good education, not from a ſenſe of guilt and want — Prayers ſaid to pacify the conſcience, or earn heaven, not offered up from hatred of iniquity, or love of righteouſneſs — religious duties performed as a taſk, not with alacrity, and delight to hold communion with GOD — and alms given, in order to think well of ourſelves, and cover the multitude of ſins, make up the religion of a Hypocrite in grain. Will you aſk then, Whether any thing more than this is neceſſary to make a good Chriſtian?

I would alſo intreat you to examine what advantage you have received from your religion. Has it ſubdued your paſſions? or rectified thoſe groſs miſtakes we naturally fall into, reſpecting the character of GOD, ourſelves, and the way of ſalvation? Has it enriched your mind with a treaſure of divine knowledge, to which you were once an entire ſtranger? A knowledge of efficacy to produce all the fruits of righteouſneſs. If you grow angry at ſuch cloſe queſtions, unable to anſwer

ſwer them in the affirmative — if you know nothing more of GOD, or yourſelf; nor have any proof that you are accepted of Him, more than you had ten or twenty years ago, into what a fatal miſtake are you fallen? Utterly deſtitute of the benefits which conſtitute the excellency of religion, yet obſtinately poſitive you are a very good Chriſtian, and need no divine change.

Let me add, if your external religion be ſufficient, as you confidently ſuppoſe, then what paſſes in your breaſt, muſt reſemble what the ſcripture ſaints experienced: for allowing they might exceed us in degrees of holineſs, yet every Chriſtian's experience, ſuppoſing it genuine, muſt be of the ſame kind as theirs. Compare your own with this ſtandard. Watchfulneſs, labor, contention againſt the fleſh, was the conſtant employment of their minds. Sometimes they could pray with delight and fervency, often they could not. We ſee them one while weary, faint, and ready to give up all for loſt. In due time their cry was heard, and they ſung a ſong of triumph. Darkneſs and light, diſtreſſes and deliverances, joy and grief, ſucceeded each other. At ſome ſeaſons, prayer, the word of the LORD, his

day

day and houſe, proved to them a rich repaſt. —At other times, they ſat like a ſick man at table, and could reliſh nothing. Now we ſee all within is peace and glowing admiration of the truth, ways, and works of GOD. By and by, trying providences move them to doubt of his love or faithfulneſs, and to behave themſelves unſeemly; till recovering, each accuſes himſelf in that humbling confeſſion, "So fooliſh and ignorant was I, even "as a beaſt before thee." Many parts of the Bible prove what is here affirmed, and the 119th *Pſalm* at large.

I appeal now to your conſcience, who build your hope of going to heaven on your external religion and virtues; Are you acquainted with ſuch changes in your mind? or do you not rather hate and reproach this experimental proof of innate depravity as Enthuſiaſm? Do not you ſay your prayers at one time as well as at another? Do not you do your duty in going to church one Sunday juſt as well as at another? And at all times think, without giving yourſelf the leaſt uneaſineſs about the matter, you do as well as can be expected from ſuch frail creatures as we all are? Do

you

you not live a perfect ſtranger to a change from darkneſs to light, from fear to lively hope, from grief to joy, on account of ſpiritual deliverances? Should this be your caſe, you ſtill want every thing eſſential to a good Chriſtian, if to be one, is to reſemble thoſe who ſtand in the Bible as patterns for our imitation. Becauſe the religion and goodneſs in which you confide, is no more like theirs, than an image made to ſpeak by mechaniſm, is like a living man.

Be no longer then ſo confident you are a good Chriſtian, becauſe you ſay your prayers, go conſtantly to church, and give alms. Try yourſelf by the Oracles of God. What think you of your corrupt nature, of your wicked heart? Is the horn of ſalvation abſolutely needful in your eyes to ſave you from yourſelf? Do you find in your own boſom, the company of two armies, the law in your members warring againſt the law of your mind; the fleſh luſting againſt the Spirit? Or, on the contrary, Are you floating down the ſtream of time, at peace with the world and the fleſh, unknowing of any hurt or impediment you receive

receive from either? In this caſe, the unchangeable decree from heaven is directly pointed againſt you. Hear it, and conſider yourſelf, and turn unto the LORD. — "If ye "live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die; but if ye "through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of "the body, ye ſhall live," *Rom.* viii.

CHAP. XVIII.

On eaſy and polite Religion.

SATAN, the World, and the Fleſh, as we have ſeen, are reſtleſs in their oppoſition to us, and always our enemies; from whoſe power, CHRIST alone can ſave. How palpable then is the error common among the rich and polite, concerning the very nature of religion? It was never deſigned, ſay they, to forbid favorite amuſements, or abridge us of the liberty to pleaſe ourſelves from day to day. It is the raving Enthuſiaſt's pencil, which draws

draws this ſmiling Cherub * with the features of a demon.

Thus under the name of innocent amuſements, licentiouſneſs is encouraged, and Chriſtian ſelf-denial deemed the penance of gloomy bigots.

The contraſt between ſcriptural religion, and this eaſy ſubſtitute, choſen in its place, will fully appear from the following compariſon.

Men ought always to "watch and pray, "that they enter not into temptation," ſays the Judge of all.—You may indulge without fear or ſcruple, if your fortune can bear the expence, in every diverſion, ſays the ſmiling cherub. "Let your loins be girded, and "your lamps burning, and ye yourſelves "like men, who wait for the coming of the "LORD;" is his command to his church. Enjoy freely dance and ſong, the ſtage, the tavern, the card-table. After this the dregs both of your time and ſpirits, will ſuffice for devotional

* Liberal religion, as ſome call it, in oppoſition to ancient Chriſtianity, is often repreſented under the image of a ſmiling Cherub, to denote its great good humour, and the large gratifications it allows us.

tional duties, ſays the ſmiling cherub. "Except a man deny himſelf, and take up his "croſs daily, and follow me, he cannot be "my diſciple;" ſaith the LORD.—There can be no harm in conforming to the vogue, and joining in all mirthful paſtimes, kindly provided to relax the mind, and promote good humor, ſays the cherub. "Strait is the gate, "and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto "life, and few there be that find it. For we "wreſtle not againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt "principalities and powers: Put on therefore "the whole armor of GOD, that having done "all, ye may be able to ſtand," ſays the Wiſdom from above.—To make religion a work of ſo much difficulty, paints the Deity as taking pleaſure in the mortification of his creatures, and frightens them from his ſervice, ſays the ſmiling cherub. The word of GOD calls Chriſtians to watchfulneſs, as centinels to their poſt;—to run for the heavenly prize, like racers to the goal—to hardſhip and war, as good ſoldiers; adding exhortations, intreaties, commands to ſlay every luſt, though it be painful as plucking out a right eye; declaring, "Many ſhall ſeek to enter into life, "and ſhall not be able;"—that fooliſh virgins,

gins, and ſlothful ſervants, periſh together with greater offenders. Theſe exhortations, commands, and warnings, ſo expreſſive of difficulty and labor, belong to the ages of perſecution, before the world and the church joined in friendly alliance, ſays the ſmiling cherub, and only reſpect that fierce conteſt. We live in happier days, when our whole duty may be done without any combat, mortification, vigilance or labor.

O vile ſeducer! Can the way to eternal glory in any age, be a life of ſloth and ſelf-indulgence? Are not watchfulneſs, prayer, perſevering ſelf-denial, always neceſſary to preſerve the weak, and defend the tempted? Do the pleaſures of ſin allure now with leſs attraction than in former times? Are our hearts leſs evil, or do worldly luſts ſolicit with feebler force, than they were wont to do ſeventeen ages paſt? Or do the power, ſubtilty, and malice of wicked angels, long practiſed in the deſtruction of ſouls, require, on our parts, leſs reſiſtance or protection? Beſides, What ideas muſt men conceive of heaven, who ſuppoſe it poſſible for thoſe to enter there, who know no more ſpiritual gratifications, than the ſtage, tavern, or card-table afford? who

lead their life in such ignorance, indolence, and voluptuousness, that some well-regulated states, would have punished with heavy penalties? Unless a transformation of soul take place, persons of this character are no more capable of admission into heaven, than profligate villains, a nuisance to all around them; since there is no more meetness for spiritual enjoyment in one than in the other. And to lead men to hope a life of this kind can end well, is to take part with their evil passions, instead of exhorting them to seek deliverance from their dominion. It is to set aside the essential duty of Christians, whilst the worship, for form's sake, is retained. But such heartless worship, in the eyes of men of sense, is a farce; in the eyes of sincere Christians, a profanation of the name of religion; in the eyes of God, mockery and insult.

Instead, therefore, of "saying to the seers, "see not, and to the prophets, prophesy not: "speak to us smooth things, prophesy deceit, "cause the holy One of *Israel* to cease from "before us."—Instead of loving this cruel flattery, desire earnestly to hear the whole truth,—"whatsoever God hath commanded."

Desire

Desire to have the devices of Satan, the temptations of the World, the corruptions of the Flesh, all set before you without disguise. Desire no abatement whatever, may be made by the teachers of CHRIST, in compliance with custom, or in gratification of your passions.

CHAP. XIX.

CHRIST *a Saviour from Death.*

THE last enemy, out of whose hands, the LORD, the horn of salvation delivers his people, is Death: which, whether its origin, manner of approach, or nature be considered, deserves the name of King of Terrors. It entered into the world by divine decree, to punish the most enormous offence, except the murder of CHRIST, which the sun ever saw: for man, like the angels, was made upright, though liable to fall: surrounded with a profusion of blessings from GOD, who beheld his new-made creature with delight, and pronounced

him *very good*. " And the LORD GOD com-
" manded the man, ſaying, Of every tree in
" the garden, thou mayeſt eat freely; but of
" the tree of the knowledge of good and evil,
" thou ſhalt not eat of it; for in the day thou
" eateſt of it, thou ſhalt ſurely die," *Gen.* ii.

Nevertheleſs *Adam* did eat of it, though he knew the threatening included his ſeed, as one with himſelf: for it is againſt all reaſon to ſuppoſe the ſentence could contain any greater extent of puniſhment, than *Adam* underſtood the threatening to do. Every poſſible circumſtance therefore of provocation, met together in this one offence. It was the vileſt ingratitude againſt divine bounty ſurrounding him on every ſide. It was an impudent impeachment of his ſupreme Benefactor's wiſdom, goodneſs and love, as if the command had been fooliſh, hard, or envious. It was a violent ſuſpicion, if not a denial of his veracity. It was a wilful oppoſition to his authority, a revolt from his government, an exaltation of himſelf above GOD, in ſeeking his own intereſt and pleaſure, by trampling upon the honor, law, and majeſty of his Maker.

This

This one offence, big with all hateful qualities, inſtantly wrought a diſaſtrous change in man's condition, as terrible earthquakes do in capital cities, leaving behind it a ſad ſcene of ruins: for the moment *Adam* tranſgreſſed, the threatening began to take place. *Inſtantly* the light, the preſence, the love and image of GOD, departed from him, with the immortality which he before poſſeſſed: for his deeply injured Maker withdrew, as it ſeemed neceſſary he ſhould, from rebel man. He ſummoned him to appear, and hear his doom, and then expelled him Paradiſe, to wander on the earth, a poor, guilty, corrupt and dying creature.

Death, entering thus by ſin into the world, as a puniſhment for the higheſt act of rebellion againſt GOD, always ſtrikes men with terror, till ſunk into brutiſh ſtupidity, or till the Saviour has taken away its ſting.

The *manner* of Death's approach, bears ſtrong teſtimony alſo to its guilty origin: for till ſuperabounding grace has converted this foe into a friend, he exceedingly diſtreſſes the children of men, whether ſpringing upon them from an ambuſh, or making his ad-

vance by regular ſiege. In the former caſe, Death appals, and ſeizes in a moment the voluptuous in the midſt of their carouſals — utterly impoveriſhes with a ſtroke the proſperous ſons of commerce, exulting in their day-dreams of realizing their wealth — drives, as a whirlwind, the ambitious from the face of the earth, when their honors are blooming, their preferments enlarging, and all their projects ripening to their wiſh.

What ſudden havock alſo does this deſtroyer make of domeſtic comforts in which we may lawfully delight. A ſwift arrow from his quiver, ſtrikes to the heart the bridegroom rejoicing over his bride — cuts off a lovely bloſſom, the only child, from its parental ſtem — divorces thoſe in a moment, whoſe conjugal affection, matured by years of ſweeteſt ſociety, united them like ſoul and body — divorces them, when the tender pledges of their love, moſt need their mutual care. By ſuch daily inroads, this dreadful ſpoiler haraſſes mankind, leaving thoſe who have yet eſcaped his ſhafts, and ſtill more thoſe who have been wounded, anxious for the abſolute uncertainty of all their poſſeſſions.

When

When inſtead of thus ſeizing upon his prey, Death advances, as in general more ſlowly, his aſſaults are bitterly diſtreſſing.

——— All maladies
Of ghaſtly ſpaſm, or racking torture, qualms
Of heart-ſick agony, all fev'rous kinds
And fierce catarrhs, and pining atrophy,
Inteſtine ſtone and ulcer, cholic pangs,
Dropſies, and aſthmas, and joint-racking rheums.
Dire is the toſſing, deep the groans,
Whilſt over them, triumphant Death his dart
Shakes ———

At length he ſtrikes the blow, which brings on the entire ſenſible deſtruction of the body, ſoon making it too hideous for the eye of tendereſt friends to look on, too offenſive to be endured at all, a fit tenant for the grave, a feaſt for worms.

Yet how ſmall a part of the evil of Death, do all theſe gloomy ignominious circumſtances contain! They are but the awful introduction to that "outward darkneſs," which receives thoſe who die in their ſins: "for the wages "of ſin is death:"—Death, oppoſed to the holineſs and happineſs of eternal life in the preſence of GOD, which muſt therefore mean a ſtate of hopeleſs miſery.

And can the horn of ſalvation deliver out of all this dreadful calamity? Can He cauſe light to ſpring up in the midſt of ſuch darkneſs, and fill the cloſe of life with divine conſolations? He can, He does. His all-ſufficient grace prepares his people for the combat with this laſt enemy, animates and ſuccours them in the midſt of it; enriches them immenſely at the moment of their diſſolution, and redeems them at laſt in the ſight of men and angels, from every trace of death's dominion.

To encounter Death, the faithful are prepared, both by their knowledge and experience. "They know in whom they have "believed, and that He is able to keep that "which they have committed unto Him." They know their Redeemer is the mighty GOD—and that part of the everlaſting Covenant between the Father and Him, inſures their victory over the grave;—for it is written, "Thy dead men, ſhall live; with my "dead body ſhall they ariſe. Awake, and "ſing, ye that dwell in duſt, for thy dew, is "as the dew of herbs, and the earth ſhall "caſt out the dead," *Iſa.* xxvi.

Theſe

These wonderful things of GOD's law, being certified to them by the holy Ghost, become the object of their admiration, the foundation of lively hope, and their richest treasure. Hence Death grows familiar to their minds, as a translation to enjoy spiritual life to perfection in the presence of their beloved, the sweetness of which they have imperfectly known already. — Answers to their prayers, and a change of state in passing from darkness to light, from death to life, in their conversion, alters the visage of Death, and its nature too. Instead of seizing upon them, to root them out of the earth, and pluck them out of their dwelling, it comes to exalt them to glory, and honor, and immortality.

Add to this, the heart of CHRIST, who endured in his own person the agonies of Death, for the salvation of his people, is full of compassion towards them: for we are assured, He is touched with a feeling of their infirmities. Wherefore when they walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, his tender care and guardian power are over them, so that they shall fear no evil.

Is this a concluſion unconfirmed by facts? No, it is beyond a doubt, that the ſaints in CHRIST have departed with ſweet complacency in their countenances, and "abounding in hope, through the power of the holy "Ghoſt given unto them." They triumphed in ancient time to the aſtoniſhment of all, to the converſion even of proud Pagan philoſophers, whoſe chief was wont to call *Death* "of all dreadful things, the moſt dreadful." The primitive Chriſtians conquered when they fell. They cried out, "Death ſhall not "be able to ſeparate us from the love of GOD, "which is in CHRIST JESUS our Lord.— "Death is ours — Death is gain."

Now are we to limit this his overflowing love, as too many injurious to CHRIST and his church do, to the firſt believers. For at all times He is the ſame all-ſufficient friend to his people. What ſpiritual ſuccours therefore He ſupplies, when the body is ſinking, appears from the behavior of many of his dying members.—Who can behold them in their laſt conflict, without being compelled to ſay, They are not left to ſuffer the ſentence of Death on their bodies, without the cup of conſolation

conſolation to drink? We have ſeen, we have ſeen, thouſands can atteſt, the exit of real Chriſtians, inſpiring every ſpectator at the ſame moment, with the ſame requeſt, "Let "me die the death of the righteous, and let "my *Afterſtate* * be like his."

Their bodies, it is true, vanquiſhed by Death, return to the duſt. Yet their ſouls, ſo far from ſuffering loſs, receive unſpeakable advantage from this blow. Immediately they live, where the place of their abode, the high excellency of the ſociety they join, and their own perfection, fill them with happineſs beyond the reach of our ideas: for as ſoon as

* The word *Acherith* ſignifies an *aftertime* or *ſtate*;—a ſtate, which begins again after ſome remarkable period. See Mr *Peters*'s *Critical Diſſertation on the Book of Job*, p. 288. 1ſt Edition.

This maſterly writer demonſtrates, that the church of God has all along been acquainted with the Covenant founded in the promiſe of a Redeemer, and of eternal life in Him. Biſhop *Sherlock* read this Diſſertation (I have been told) twice over. An unqueſtionable proof of its uncommon excellency, ſince it could pleaſe a firſt-rate genius, in a ſcience to which he had ſo long applied himſelf.

as "absent from the body, they are present "with the LORD †."

Nor is the triumph of Death over the bodies of the saints in CHRIST, more than transitory: for their graves, are but so many consecrated repositories, each under inviolable obligation

† "This scripture," (2 *Cor.* v. 6.) says Dr *Watts*, in his *Essay on a separate State*, "seems to me so plain, so "express, and so unanswerable a proof of the existence "of the spirits of good men *immediately* after death, that "I could never meet with but two ways of evading it. "The one, that St *Paul* might be *mistaken*. This needs "no answer. The other, that this text, with one or "two more of the same kind, do indeed speak of the "happiness of souls in a separate state, but they only "refer to the Apostles themselves.—I answer, the whole "church of CHRIST is encouraged with this assurance "of *immediate* happiness after Death. Witness what "goes before, and what follows the text. All agree "this belongs to the whole church."

Besides, St *John* utterly denies this vast difference, some are so fond of making, between the Apostles and the whole church, in point of spiritual privileges; by assuring us the very end of his writings, and consequently of the whole College of Apostles, was, that All who received their words with true faith, should have *fellowship* with them, 1 *John* i. 3.

If the Reader desires to see this matter discussed, he may consult my *Duty of Man*, p. 491. 2d Edition.

ligation to preſerve and reſtore upon demand, every atom of ſacred duſt, entruſted to their keeping. Thouſands of years indeed, muſt paſs between the interment and reſurrection of the ſaints. Still at the deſtined moment, the heavens ſhall open; the trump of GOD ſhall ſound; the Saviour ſhall come in the clouds of heaven, with great power and glory. Then ſhall men and angels ſee him ſitting on his throne, and making all things new. Then ſhall matter of fact prove, to the conviction of the whole infidel world, that the horn of ſalvation has delivered his people to the uttermoſt, "out of the hands "of all their enemies." Then ſhall he appear "the reſurrection and the life, the plague "of death, the deſtruction of the grave." Then ſhall the vile bodies of his ſaints, "be "changed into the likeneſs of his own glo- "rious body," and become incorruptible, and ſplendid as the ſun.

Thus the whole church conſummated in bliſs, with eyes full of rapturous love, all faſtened upon JESUS of *Nazareth*, ſhall cry out, "HE hath ſwallowed up Death in vic- "tory!"

CHAP.

CHAP. XX.

On falſe confidence in a well-ſpent life.

THIS doctrine, that the church is redeemed out of the hands of Death, only by the horn of ſalvation, proves the miſtake of attempting to ſubdue the fear of it, by looking back on a well-ſpent life. An attempt equally abſurd and impious, in thoſe who call themſelves Chriſtians. For what is the beſt life any man can have to reflect on? It does not come up to a thouſandth part of his duty. Conſider the excellency of GOD, and of his law; our increaſing debt for mercies beſtowed, and our great advantages to know and obey Him. In theſe circumſtances, above all, ſhould not our love to Him be perfectly pure, and more active, than thirſt for gain in miſers, or love of glory in the ſoldier's breaſt? On no account ſhould it ever be mixed with ſelfiſh motives; prove languid, much leſs be violated through love of ſin. Yet where is the man upon earth, who can bear to have his life brought to this teſt?

Again,

Again, Our love to our neighbour ought to keep us from all evil-ſpeaking; from every expreſſion of unkindneſs and diſreſpect; — ought to fill us with pity for his faults, and bowels of mercies towards him in all his ſufferings. Who alive, dare look his fellow-creatures in the face, and ſay, In this manner have I ever loved you all?

Once more; Our hatred of the firſt motions of ſin, before a purpoſe of offending is conceived, ought to be quick and effectual to repel it, as our natural inſtinct is for ſelf-preſervation. But how unaccountably ſtupid, in this reſpect, are the moſt excellent! — How often defiled with iniquity, without any concern! The concluſion from this fair ſtating of man's condition is, that the beſt life of the beſt man upon earth, affords abundant cauſe for humiliation and ſelf-loathing; needs infinite mercy to paſs over its offences, and the blood of CHRIST, who is GOD, to make atonement for them.

Is this concluſion, ſo offenſive to pride, a concluſion drawn by erring mortals? No: It is a ſelf-evident ſcripture conſequence from our LORD's command to his diſciples, *daily* to implore

implore the forgiveneſs of their treſpaſſes; which muſt imply, that they *daily* offend. Can the ſame life, then, I aſk, ſo defective and ſtained; which calls for daily humiliation, which needs infinite mercy, and the blood of CHRIST to put away its ſins?—Can this ſame life be reviewed with pleaſure, and give juſt confidence to diſarm Death of its ſting?

So abſurd would it be to look back upon our paſt life, for comfort in death, however excellent our works may have been. But it is well known, that no truly good perſon, ever truſts in his own righteouſneſs for comfort. This is the miſtake of vain, idle people, who know neither GOD, nor themſelves: who firſt make their own rule of duty, and then applaud themſelves for their obſervance of it, becauſe they think they do no harm, and their conduct is not ſcandalous.

Further, The attempt to ſubdue the fear of Death by conſciouſneſs of our own virtue, is in the ſight of GOD an high provocation, no leſs than a groſs abſurdity in itſelf: becauſe it pours contempt upon the heaven-appointed means of vanquiſhing this laſt enemy.

The

The ſcripture teaches, " that the death of " CHRIST *alone* aboliſhed death; — that He " taſted death for every one of the ſons He " ſhould bring to glory, to deliver them, " who through fear of death, were all their " lifetime ſubject to bondage." The ſcripture teaches us, that the Savior led Sin, Death, and Hell, our captivity captive; and the World, as we have ſeen, is to end with his triumphant appearance, as their deſtroyer. Every attempt, therefore, to overcome them by confidence in our own righteouſneſs, is a ſacrilegious attack upon his glory:—A claim, derogatory to the merit of the blood of the Lamb:—A claim, which eclipſes the Sun of righteouſneſs. He is as nothing; the well-ſpent life is all: for we may as reaſonably attempt to move at once in oppoſite directions, as to find acceptance with GOD in part from our own righteouſneſs, and in part from the ſacrifice of CHRIST.

Fatal miſtake! into which many ſerious people fall, through pride and ignorance. Baſe treatment of Him! who in his own perſon overcame the ſharpneſs of Death, and then, as the great High Prieſt of his church, opened the way into the Holieſt, by his own

blood. — Self-exaltation offenſive in the ſight of GOD, as matter of fact ſtrongly indicates! For viſit dying perſons, who, as is common, endeavor to cover themſelves with this falſhood, you will find them, though in full poſſeſſion of their reaſon, miſerably dejected. Their lips drop not a ſingle expreſſion to comfort afflicted relations, or confound infidels, by a Chriſtian triumph in their laſt hours. Nor is it ſtrange, that the Light of Life ſo deſpiſed, ſhould not viſit them, or that there ſhould be no appearance of any advantage, received from the Goſpel, in victory over this laſt enemy.

Phyſicians, friends, relations, generally treat the ſick and dying, as if Death was the purſuivant of incenſed juſtice, the beginning of ſorrows. And men of this ſelf-righteous character love to have it ſo; becauſe the leaſt hint that the Judge is at the door, would ſtrike them with a pannic. What can have the appearance of deluſive hope more than this? Now is the time of trial. Now, when the underſtanding ſtill remains entire, let pleaſing reflections on a well-ſpent life, do the office of a Savior. Now let us ſee the anſwer of a good conſcience towards GOD, and boldneſs

neſs to enter into the Holieſt obtained, without the knowledge of CHRIST, and the power of his reſurrection.

If this gloomy awful manner of meeting Death, ſtrongly ſuggeſts the idea of falſe dependence, and the hope of an hypocrite; the ſcripture is poſitive in this point. It accuſes all, who build their expectation of mercy from GOD on a well-ſpent life, as fruſtrating his grace — and making the death of CHRIST appear fooliſhneſs itſelf: for if there be a law which can give life, then CHRIST is dead in vain. All who expect mercy in this way, are of the works of the law: "but ſo many "as are of the works of the law, are curſed," *Gal.* iii.

I have dwelt the longer on this miſtake, in hopes of relieving many ſerious and devout people, whoſe caſe is pitiable indeed. They ſtrive to be prepared for eternity, by doing many things which are commanded, yet the dread of Death perpetually haunts them. They tremble as much at the thought of appearing before GOD, as if He was an inexorable Judge, and not a tender Father. This dread is owing, not to any particular offences, which pain

their consciences, but to a false reliance on the merit of their own righteousness.

May such persons be brought to understand the import, and believe the truth of the glorious proclamation made from heaven, for the full relief of guilty dying creatures.

" In this mountain (on which JESUS was " slain, an offering for sin) shall the LORD " of hosts make unto all people a feast of " fat things, a feast of wines on the lees; a " feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines " on the lees, well refined." Such a soul-satisfying repast, are " the spiritual blessings in " heavenly things, in CHRIST JESUS." And to crown them all, as it follows, " He will " destroy in this mountain (by the death of " CHRIST) the face of the covering cast over " all people, and the vail that is spread over " all nations," (in that dreadful darkness, which our dissolution brings with it.) " He " will swallow up death in victory," *Isa.* xxv.

Acquaint thyself with this almighty conqueror, and the last Enemy shall no more appall thee. After the example of *Jacob*, *Moses*, *David*, and St *Paul*, thou shalt express thy confidence

confidence, when thy flesh is failing. "He "who liveth, and behold He was dead, and "is alive again, and liveth for evermore, and "hath the keys of death and of hell," will not disappoint thy unfeigned dependence upon the blood of his cross. If the full use of thy reason is preserved, thy faith shall cheer thy heart. The time would fail, but to name the multitude who have triumphed under most afflictive, mortal diseases — who *then* have testified, "there is a God, that giveth songs in "the night." I myself have seen whole families comforted for their great loss, by the dying behavior of a beloved husband or wife, son or daughter. And surely, for our own sakes, we should wish to die in peace, when our tender affections will otherwise greatly distress us, and the taking final leave of dearest relations, add much to our sufferings.

May the Reader and Writer of these lines feel, and those around us see, that even when we are dying, we are saved out of the hands of death. How shall we then magnify the horn of salvation, and confirm the faith of those who have believed in his name! Our memory shall thus in the noblest manner, be engraven on the hearts of relations and friends,

who will be taught to connect with our departure, a lively idea of their blessedness, "who die in the LORD."

CHAP. XXI.

On the Covenant of Grace.

THE Reader may understand, from what has been offered, how well that grand title of Horn of Salvation, becomes the LORD: since he redeems his people from the curse of the law; from the dominion of Satan; from the power of this evil world; from their innate corruption; from death itself, and the grave.

This salvation of sinners, in number as the drops of dew, we are authorized to affirm, is the grandest manifestation of the glory of GOD, *Ephes.* iii. 10. 1 *Pet.* i. 12. A scheme of divine beneficence, reaching in its saving efficacy from the first offence in paradise, to the day of CHRIST's second appearance — promised to *Adam*, and afterwards established with

with *Abraham* and his ſeed, by a covenant and oath from GOD.

Thus ſupremely great is the idea, which *Zacharias* teaches us to conceive of this affair, by declaring that the horn of ſalvation was raiſed up,

" To perform the mercy promiſed to our " fathers, and to remember his holy Cove- " nant: The oath which He ſware to our fa- " ther *Abraham*, that he would grant unto " us, That we being delivered out of the " hands of our enemies, might ſerve Him " without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs " before Him, all the days of our life."

Obſerve, the coming of CHRIST, is called *mercy* to the fathers: by parity of reaſon, it muſt be ſo to all the faithful before his birth, no leſs than to them. Accordingly, the ſcripture ſaith, " His blood was ſhed for the re- " miſſion of ſins which are paſt," and " for " the redemption of tranſgreſſions, which " were under the firſt teſtament." Nor was it unknown to the fathers, or the faithful, that they were to be ſaved in the LORD: for tho' the Jews in general, like Chriſtians, grovelling in earthly purſuits, only expected a Meſ-

ſiah, who would exalt their depreſſed nation to the height of temporal dominion; yet the ſpiritual ſeed always looked for a ſpiritual Redeemer. "They ſaw the promiſes (of "CHRIST) afar off, and were perſuaded of "them, and embraced them, counting them-"ſelves pilgrims and ſtrangers here below."

So deeply were the fathers indebted to GOD for his grace, that they ſerve as examples of obedience to the Chriſtian church. Yet neither *Abel*'s righteous works, nor *Enoch*'s walk with GOD; neither *Noah*'s dauntleſs courage in ſtanding forth a preacher of righteouſneſs to the world of the ungodly, nor *Abraham*'s moſt illuſtrious faith, could have preſerved them from periſhing. Notwithſtanding their good qualities, they muſt have died in their ſins, had they not found redemption in the blood of CHRIST.—Through Him they obtained every excellency which adorns their names; the precious faith in which they lived and died, with the crown of glory at the end of their warfare. All was diſpenſed to them on the Savior's account, through their relation to Him: for pretenſions of any kind to ſuch favors from their own obedience, they they had none. They were ſinners ready to periſh,

periſh, when GOD was pleaſed to chooſe and call them by his grace; at their beſt eſtate polluted; and in exalting them to paradiſe, mercy rejoiced againſt judgment: for at all times "the wages of ſin was death, and eter-"nal life the gift of GOD, through JESUS "CHRIST our Lord."

Zacharias, therefore, by calling the Redemption, *Mercy to the fathers*, plainly teaches, in harmony with all ſcripture, that the ſalvation of thoſe who for goodneſs ſtand at the top of their ſpecies, is ſtill all of grace. — Boaſting is excluded: no idea of human merit is to be found; the whole glory of delivering them, as much as others, from the wrath to come, muſt be aſcribed "to the Lamb that was "ſlain."

This chief Mercy, at firſt promiſed, without particularly ſpecifying the ſpiritual bleſſings it compriſed, was afterwards ratified with *Abraham* and his ſeed by a Covenant. And when he, at the divine command, inſtantly offered up in ſacrifice his ſon, his only ſon *Iſaac*, whom he loved; in honor of that amazing act of faith, GOD was pleaſed to confirm the holy Covenant with an Oath. In both tranſactions,

ſubſequent

ſubſequent ſcriptures declare, (*Gal.* iv. 28. *Heb.* vi. 17.) *Abraham* ſtood as the Repreſentative, and Father of all the Faithful; every individual of which immenſe ſociety, was no leſs included in the Covenant and Oath, than the Patriarch himſelf.

The Covenant was gradually unfolded by the prophets, till at the diſtance of a thouſand years from *Abraham*, *Jeremiah* publiſhed the following ample account of it:

" This ſhall be the Covenant that I will " make with the houſe of *Iſrael*, after thoſe " days, ſaith the LORD; I will put my law " in their inward parts, and write it in their " hearts, and will be their GOD, and they " ſhall be my people. — And they ſhall teach " no more every man his neighbor, and " every man his brother, ſaying, Know the " LORD; for they ſhall all know me, from " the leaſt of them unto the greateſt of them, " ſaith the LORD; for I will forgive their " iniquity, and I will remember their ſin no " more," *Jer.* xxxi. 33, 34.

What tender mercy, and infinite condeſcenſion was it in the LORD GOD, thus to bind himſelf, under the moſt ſolemn engagement, to ſave

ſave his people! All this was done in pity to their ſlowneſs of heart in believing upon the force of a ſingle declaration, though from JEHOVAH Himſelf. Well He knew what diſtreſs the guilty feel, when they behold the glory of his majeſty, and the purity of his nature; when they underſtand the deteſtable qualities of ſin, and the high aggravations which have attended their own offences in particular.—What diſmaying thoughts poſſeſs the mind, when men perceive the devices of Satan; the force of natural luſts in ſoliciting forbidden gratification; the bewitching allurements in ſenſual objects; the torrent of evil cuſtom, their own impotence, and the deceitfulneſs of the human heart: Yet againſt all theſe hoſtile armies combined together, muſt they conſtantly urge their way to heaven, if ever they arrive there. Well the LORD GOD knew what muſt be the impreſſion from theſe things, upon minds become ſenſible of their expoſed condition:—ſenſible of the obſtacles, dangers, and enemies before them. Either they muſt throw off all concern for ſalvation, in deſpair of ſucceſs, or be perpetually haraſſed with the dread of periſhing by their foes at laſt: for if in theſe circumſtances, ſalvation were no more than promiſed to him

that

that ſhould overcome, and endure to the end; this would contribute very little to relieve their diſtreſs, becauſe the intereſting painful queſtion would ſtill force itſelf upon their minds, "But who is ſufficient for theſe things?" And after the leaſt wilful deviation from duty, or advantage gained over them by the enemy, they would be led to ſay, If we could not ſtand, how ſhall we ariſe when fallen? For theſe conditional promiſes, though neceſſary to define the character of the people of GOD, and confront abuſers of the doctrines of grace, in no degree *inſure* ſucceſs. But this is the very bleſſing, which our tempted, expoſed, and aſſaulted condition requires. As a ground of confidence towards GOD in theſe perilous circumſtances, the church needs, what the armies of *Iſrael* enjoyed in old time, an abſolute promiſe, "that their enemies ſhould "fall before them in battle."

When the Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, are given for this great purpoſe, and received by faith, his people can meet all their foes, numerous, mighty, ſubtil, and ſucceſsful too as they have been, without diſmay; can endure the hardſhips of war with patience;—can confidently expect a favorable turn, when all ſeems

ſeems to be againſt them; — can renew the charge, though wounded and driven back, depending upon the ſuccor they ſhall aſſuredly receive; and plead for it with growing importunity as dangers preſs; till they come off more than conquerors; ſinging, "Not unto us, not "unto us, but unto thy name be all the praiſe, "for thy loving kindneſs, and for thy truth's "ſake."

Without this holy Covenant, and Oath of GOD, to aſcertain beyond failure the ſalvation of his people, Redemption itſelf wants a ſolid foundation to reſt on, and muſt be defeated: for how ſhould thoſe be able to cope with the tempter, more than a match for *Adam* in paradiſe, who are deſtitute of his original righteouſneſs? How, without poſitive aſſurance of all-ſufficient help from GOD, are they to preſume they ſhall conquer an army of foes, ſtronger by many degrees, than that which vanquiſhed our firſt father in all his unimpaired ſtrength?

But thanks be to GOD for a better Covenant, eſtabliſhed upon new and better promiſes! He has rejoiced the hearts of his people with the certainty of final victory. He has

has left upon record his unchangeable purpose to save their souls, in the following express terms:

"God, willing more abundantly to shew "unto the heirs of promise, the immutability "of his counsel, confirmed it by an Oath, "that by two immutable things, in which it "was impossible for God to lie, we might "have a strong consolation, who have fled "for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set be-"fore us: which hope we have, as an anchor "of the soul, both sure and stedfast, which "entereth into that within the veil, whither "the Forerunner is for us entered, even "Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after "the order of *Melchisedec*," Heb. vi.

The same idea of compleat Redemption, *Zacharias* teaches in this prophecy: for the horn of salvation was raised up, that the people of God, "being delivered out of the "hands of their enemies," and assured of glory by the Covenant and Oath of Jehovah, "might serve Him without fear, in "holiness and righteousness before Him, all "the days of their life."

Behold the utmost wish of upright Christians! an absolute security that they shall persevere

ſevere in dutiful allegiance, and uncorrupted affection to the LORD; neither ſeduced by ſenſual allurements, nor ſupplanted by the deceit of the ſubtil, nor overpowered by the aſſaults of the mighty; — but having their heads covered in the day of battle, ſhall return victorious from the hard-fought field, to be unto their GOD for a name, and for an everlaſting ſign, which ſhall not be cut off.

All, all this is abſolutely ſecured in behalf of the people of GOD: for they are "viſited, "redeemed, and delivered" by the horn of ſalvation "out of the hands of their enemies, "that they may ſerve," and his Word and Oath are given that they ſhall ſerve Him in holineſs, in devout obſervance of all his ordinances; thankful for their deliverance; acknowledging his righteous dominion by unfeigned obedience; aſcribing not unto themſelves, but to his grace alone, all the good that is done in them and by them; zealous for his honor, and active in advancing his cauſe.

His people have alſo infallible ſecurity, that "they ſhall ſerve Him *in righteouſneſs*;"

that

that is, in the practice of ſincerity and truth, juſtice, kindneſs, and charity towards all men, "eſpecially the brethren,"—*All the days of their life*;—in the conſtant tenor of their conduct—*before the Lord*, from pure motives; not ſuch as pride or hypocriſy, deſire of praiſe, or mercenary ſelf-love, ſuggeſt.

Such is the ſcripture character of the people of GOD. What can be conceived more excellent? To ſerve the LORD, is the glory of angels; to ſerve Him as they do, full of reverence, yet free from ſlaviſh fears, or painful ſuſpicions, is the privilege of his people. To wear the royal livery of "holineſs to the "LORD;" amidſt all their infirmities, temptations, and enemies, ſtill perſevering in obedience, is their high diſtinction. Such a charming idea, the inſpired writers unanimouſly teach us to conceive of the myſtical body of CHRIST, which is his Church.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXII.

On the knowledge of Salvation.

THE doctrine of this prophecy, proves the miſtake of accounting the knowledge of Salvation, wild enthuſiaſm, ſpiritual pride, and blaſphemous preſumption, as it is common to do. For a preſent deliverance from the curſe of the Law, the dominion of Satan, the World and the Fleſh, wrought by the power of the LORD, in conſequence of a Covenant and an Oath, for the benefit of his church, inſuring their perſeverance "in holi-"neſs and righteouſneſs all the days of their "life," is a demonſtration, that they ſhall never periſh; and, according to expreſs teſtimony of holy writ, deſigned to be ſo underſtood and believed.

I beg leave, therefore, to offer ſome proofs in favor of a doctrine, which, from the beginning, has been the glory and triumph of Chriſtians, though now, with other conſiderable parts of Revelation, fallen into general contempt, and treated with deriſion.

It is plain then, from many declarations, that GOD greatly delights in the members of CHRIST, as their reconciled Father, and they are commanded so to regard Him. "I say "not unto you, that I will pray the Father "for you; for the Father himself loveth you, "because you have loved me, and have be- "lieved that I came out from GOD." But this paternal love cannot be manifested in temporal blessings; because many of the faithful in every age, are poor, afflicted, and evil-intreated. Nor would prosperity satisfy them; because they value and long for Salvation, above all things. With one heart and voice they say, "Thy favor, O GOD, is better than "life itself." How then can he act towards them the part of a gracious Father, if in a world full of troubles, and incapable of being satisfied with creature-good, they are to be kept in anxious suspence about their eternal welfare. Yet it must be so, unless they enjoy the knowledge of Salvation; because without this, though the LORD of glory be contemplated hanging on his cross a propitiation for sin; though the promises made to "perse- "verance in well-doing" be received; and they are now conscious, that "with simplicity

"and

" and godly ſincerity, they have their conver-
" ſation;" yet ſince no certainty can be ob-
tained, that they ſhall be preſerved in this ſtate; — ſince the moſt ſincere at one time, at another may prove moſt inſincere; and true worſhippers, may turn out traitors, rebels, apoſtates. — In circumſtances thus to the laſt degree precarious, what peace can be enjoyed in the ſervice, or family of GOD? What peace when none can be ſure, till they join " the
" ſpirits of the juſt made perfect," that they ſhall eſcape " the fire, prepared for the devil,
" and his angels?"

Should it be ſaid, that upright Chriſtians may have a *good hope*, though no knowledge that they ſhall be ſaved: I reply, this muſt be founded upon the promiſe of GOD to preſerve them, and muſt caſt out fear, or it will not manifeſt to them the love of GOD as their reconciled father. But if the foundation of this good hope is the promiſe of GOD, and the effect ſtrong conſolation, there is the full aſſurance of faith, whether the name be admitted, or not.

Beſides; If GOD be the reconciled father of all who are his children by faith in JESUS

CHRIST, as the ſcripture affirms, why are the endearing teſtimonies of his love, to be withheld from them? When our own children prove their affection to us by chearful obedience, are we wont to be reſerved on our part, in giving them to know the pleaſure we take in them? Are we backward in aſſuring them, that we ſhall promote their welfare to the utmoſt of our power? Such tokens of paternal love always invigorate filial affection. "If ye then being evil know how to give "good things unto your children, how much "more ſhall your heavenly father, give the "holy Ghoſt to them who aſk for Him?" The holy Ghoſt, whoſe office is to be the ſeal, the comforter; the earneſt and pledge of the eternal inheritance.

How then will thoſe diſputers anſwer it to GOD, who chooſe to diveſt Him of the bowels of a father? who brand with opprobrious names, the rich communications of his love to thoſe who walk with him uprightly? who repreſent Him only in the awful character of moral Governor and Judge of all, ſure to make ſtrict inquiry into our conduct, but ſeem prejudiced ſtrangely againſt the conſequences of that endearing relation of an affectionate parent;

parent; — that "his ſecret ſhould be with them "who fear Him, and that He ſhould ſhew "them his Covenant; — that he ſhould come "unto them, and make his abode with them, "filling their hearts with peace and joy in "believing, and cauſing them to abound in "hope, through the power of the holy Ghoſt."

But if we are taught to conclude from the goodneſs of GOD, and his paternal love to the church of CHRIST, that He will give them to know, that they ſhall certainly be ſaved, the truth of this concluſion is much more confirmed, when the knowledge of Salvation is proved to be the beſt preſervative from diſobedience, and the ſtrongeſt incitement to lead a holy life. Yet in the very nature of things, every ſuperabundant manifeſtation of undeſerved love, *when underſtood*, muſt have this effect. For though we may abuſe and inſult mercy exerciſed towards us, it is only whilſt we know not our own deſerts. Thoſe who think they have received but little, will love little, whatever favors are beſtowed upon them. Thoſe, who contrary to their acknowledged demerit, have received much, will love much; as CHRIST has decided the matter. And "if any man love GOD, he will keep his

commandments." Almoſt incredible are the efforts, which have been made to ſerve a beloved perſon, where ſenſe of excellency in the object, has concurred with gratitude for favors received. Such inſtances are the embelliſhment of hiſtory, the wonder and delight of all mankind *.

Moſt ſtrange then would it be, and contrary to the very conſtitution of our nature, if the manifeſtation of GOD's everlaſting love, to thoſe who know they deſerve everlaſting deſtruction (which is the caſe of all real Chriſtians) ſhould not conſtrain them to love Him unfeignedly in return, all excellent as He is.

To place us only within the poſſibility of eternal life, by a conditional ranſom (pardon the

* The common people of all nations, even ſoldiers and ſailors, though in general immoral, to a proverb, always ſhew the force of love upon their hearts towards a compaſſionate, generous commander. Thouſands of his ſoldiers would ſooner ſacrifice their lives, than ſee him periſh for want of their help. Nay, if it be but a dog, who has ſet his heart upon us, there are very few, who feel not themſelves conſtrained by the affection of the poor animal to love him again.—From hence calculate the force with which the knowledge of the everlaſting love of GOD towards us, muſt in its natural tendency operate.

the expreſſion) or to encourage us in the midſt of ten thouſand foes with a conditional promiſe, that if we exert ourſelves to the end, as we ought, we ſhall conquer; but without poſitive aſſurance of all-ſufficient aid to per ſevere, leaves a dread upon the ſpirits of falling into endleſs miſery, by a final miſcarriage: for we can never tell what a total change of our condition from good to the reverſe, a year, or a day may bring forth. Conſequently, if our concern for ſalvation is ſtrong, we muſt be agitated like men, whoſe All lies at ſtake in a moſt perilous enterprize, where few in compariſon eſcape with their life. What joyous hope, what warmth of gratitude, can ever ſpring from ſuch a proſpect?

Suppoſe, on the contrary, that God for his great love wherewith He loved us, is pleaſed to make a Covenant, and confirm that Covenant by Oath, that all who really commit their poor, helpleſs, guilty ſouls into his hands, who is given for ſalvation to the ends of the earth, ſhall, maugre all their enemies, "ſerve "Him in holineſs and righteouſneſs before "Him all the days of their life," and be raiſed up every one at the laſt day.

How forcibly adapted is ſuch a plenary grant to engage the heart in the ſervice of GOD ;—to make men fear and tremble before his goodneſs, feeling ſomething of a ſacred horror, when ſolicited to preſumptuous offences ! How mighty in efficacy to load them with condemnation, and fill them with a ſenſe of their own vileneſs, ſhould they commit ſin ! And thus prove the means of their recovery.

Facts confirm the truth of this reaſoning. We cannot deny the ſalutary effects, which flow from a manifeſtation of the everlaſting love of GOD to the ſoul, when we ſee the wiſeſt, humbleſt, beſt of men, made ſuch by this very means. For inſtance, *Abraham* was an idolater, a *Syrian* ready to periſh ; — but when JEHOVAH appeared to him, promiſing to be " his GOD, and his exceeding great reward," he was ever after the Friend of GOD. *Jacob*, *Moſes*, *Samuel*, and *Daniel*, all Chriſtians agree to admire, and are commanded to imitate.— What made them to differ ? The love of GOD manifeſted to them in ſuch an abundant degree. Who does not ſtand amazed at the lives of the apoſtles, and above all at the labors of St *Paul ?* yet how few diſcern the cauſe of their ſuperior excellency ! They all loved much,

much, becauſe they were all aſſured, that "their names were written in the book of "life;" on which account, CHRIST commanded them to rejoice, and not in their apoſtolic gifts or authority. He engaged his veracity, that when He left them, He would return again, to receive them to Himſelf in glory.

The ſame certainty of everlaſting ſalvation was poſſeſſed by the primitive church of CHRIST. Witneſs the apoſtle's declaration to the faithful at *Corinth*, that "all their afflic-"tions were light, and but for a moment; "becauſe, *we know*, ſaith he, that when our "earthly houſe of this tabernacle is diſſolved, "we have a building of GOD, an houſe not "made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Witneſs his forbidding them to go to law before unbelievers, by appealing with ſurpriſing boldneſs to their knowledge that they ſhould judge the world and angels; — be preſent on thrones of glory to atteſt the juſtice of the final ſentence paſſed on all that periſh, 1 *Cor.* vi. 2. Witneſs his commendation of the faithful, for "taking joyfully the ſpoiling of their "goods, becauſe they knew in themſelves, "they

" they had a better and more enduring ſub-
" ſtance."

Human nature, it is confeſſed, is at all times the ſame. And our enemies and temptations are nearly ſo. Wherefore the ſame manifeſtation of the everlaſting love of GOD to the ſoul, which produced in old time ſuch excellent fruits, ſuch unſhaken attachment to GOD, would work in a ſimilar manner at preſent. And it is upon this account that I conclude we muſt enjoy now, as fully as the ſaints of old did, aſſurance of the love of GOD towards us, in order to make us " followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promiſes." Since it ſeems a thing abſolutely impoſſible that ſuch Chriſtians ſhould love and delight to obey GOD, who think they honor him and commend their own modeſty, by denying the knowledge of ſalvation till the judgment day, or the hour of death; like thoſe who were always confident that to be abſent from the body, would prove an immediate tranſlation into the preſence of the LORD.

Further it is neceſſary, that there ſhould be ſome invaluable privilege appropriated to upright Chriſtians, deſigned as a means,

not

not only of engaging more ſtrongly their affections to the LORD, but of detecting and confronting falſe profeſſors of the Chriſtian Faith. This deciſive touch-ſtone is the knowledge of ſalvation. Talk only of an uncertain hope of going to heaven thro' the mercy of GOD, and you will find no one without it. From natural inſtinct, the baſeſt of men, flatter themſelves they ſhall eſcape the wrath to come; and conclude they know as much about their future allotment, as any body elſe does concerning themſelves. Wherefore they remain eaſy and preſumptuous, in groſs darkneſs to the laſt.

But from the doctrine of this prophecy, ſuch ſelf-deceivers may be confronted. Their preſumption may be overthrown, by proving, that the faithful enjoy at preſent an ineſtimable privilege, to which they are utter ſtrangers. —Propound the knowledge of ſalvation, built on oaths, and promiſes, and blood, promiſed to every member of CHRIST, which they all enjoy, or ſeek diligently to obtain; immediately the hypocriſy of falſe profeſſors ſtands detected, becauſe they are convinced in their own conſciences, that this precious gift from heaven belongs not to them. Hence

they

they muſt confeſs themſelves to be what they are, or deny, againſt plain ſcripture evidence, that our heavenly Father is thus bountiful to his children. Wherefore in all the reſentment which envious ſelf-intereſt can excite, they blaſpheme the knowledge of ſalvation, unable to bear the ſight it gives them, of their own poverty and miſery, as Cain was to endure the divine favor manifeſted to his righteous brother, full of faith.

I add further, it is perfectly rational to conclude, that different motives to obey God predominate in the different ſtates, through which we muſt paſs in our way to heaven. Fear of wrath, like the rod to little children, is of great uſe, in alarming conſcience, in working by the principle of ſelf preſervation upon captive ſinners to cry mightily for deliverance. Yet much more excellent principles afterwards actuate the faithful, becauſe what proceeds only from ſervile fear, and mercenary ſelf-love, all mankind deſpiſe. How much more then muſt God reject it as refuſe? Yet ſo long as we live uncertain whether we ſhall be ſaved, higher motives to obey God can ſcarcely take place in our breaſts: becauſe if the weight of eternal things is duly felt, but the iſſue remains

remains in abſolute ſuſpence, we muſt fear more than love; dread more the puniſhment of ſin than hate its properties;—obey more in order to gain eternal life, than from delight in GOD, or his Commandments. And is not this to be very mean, and ſelfiſh, and mercenary; that is, unholy to the laſt? No ſervices whatſoever, ſpringing from ſuch baſe principles can honor either the law, or the lawgiver. In the midſt of all we can do, with theſe views, we only reſemble the monkey, who refrains from breaking the china for fear of the whip, or is in very good humour for the ſake of the nuts!

But this reproach has no place, when we have received by faith, the promiſe, covenant, and oath of GOD, "that we ſhall ſerve Him "all the days of our life, in holineſs and "righteouſneſs before Him." Obedience in this caſe ſprings from gratitude and true nobility of mind. It is obedience, in quality the ſame as that which angels pay, obedience to the perfect law of liberty. "The will of GOD "is done on earth, as it is done in heaven," not for any advantage to be gained—but becauſe the Lord is "worthy to receive glory, "and honor, and power. Worthy is the "Lamb

" Lamb that was ſlain, for he hath redeemed
" us to GOD with his blood.

Theſe are ſome of the ſolid reaſons, why we believe that upright Chriſtians may know that they ſhall certainly be ſaved. The charge therefore of wild enthuſiaſm, ſo audaciouſly publiſhed by many modern divines againſt the full aſſurance of faith, proves a charge derogatory in the higheſt degree to the goodneſs of GOD, towards his church; is injurious to the cauſe of holineſs; contradicts repeated declarations of ſcripture; and robs the faithful of the nobleſt motives to obey their GOD.

CHAP. XXIII.

A further defence of the full aſſurance of Faith.

THE reproach caſt upon the church of CHRIST, as guilty of wild enthuſiaſm, in maintaining the knowledge of ſalvation, has been proved groundleſs.—No leſs ſo, is the charge of ſpiritual pride: for there is no pride in being abſolutely certain of what GOD has been pleaſed to beſtow. Is it pride

in

in us to maintain, that we are greatly diſtinguiſhed in the place of our nativity above ſlaves, Jews, Turks, and Idolaters? And why may we not poſſeſs, and know we do ſo, ſpiritual as well as temporal privileges, without ſelf-exaltation?

Beſides, all who believe, have already received in Chriſt himſelf, an infinitely richer gift than everlaſting ſalvation. If it be no pride therefore in his church, to be certain He hath died for them, it can be none in them to affirm, that they ſhall be ſaved thro' his death: becauſe the favor of being enabled to lead a holy life, and at the end of it to admiſſion into heaven, is as nothing, compared to redemption by the blood of the Son of GOD. If you have not known and believed this before, attend to an obvious proof of it.

What GOD is pleaſed to fix our attention upon, as the higheſt expreſſion of his love, muſt be beyond all compariſon his richeſt gift. But our GOD never ſays, He ſo loved the world as to provide a future ſtate of reward for the righteous, but ſo as "*to give his* "*only begotten Son*, to the end that all who "believe in him ſhould not periſh but have "ever-

" everlaſting life." *Herein* is love — *Herein* is it commended, that " He gave his Son to be " the propitiation for our ſins :" who died for us, when we were enemies to GOD. —" Rivers of pleaſure at his right hand for " evermore," the ſcripture ſuppoſes, muſt be their inheritance, for whoſe redemption a price above all price has been paid. If this be denied, what force of concluſion, or idea of truth, can be found in St *Paul*'s reaſoning? " If when we were enemies, we were " reconciled to GOD by the death of his Son ; " *much more*, being reconciled, we ſhall be " ſaved by his life? He that ſpared not his " own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, " how ſhall He not *with Him alſo*, freely " give us all things?"

When the faithful therefore affirm their knowledge of Salvation, they only conclude, that He who loved them ſo much as to give his own Son for them, when in rebellion againſt Him, will not, after they have laid down their arms, ever love them ſo little, as to caſt them into hell :—that " He who endured the croſs, " deſpiſing the ſhame," for the joy of ſaving their ſouls, will not afterwards ſee them periſh, for want of ſanctifying grace.

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Were ſo great a privilege, as the knowledge of Salvation, ſaid to be acquired through any goodneſs in themſelves, or ſecured by their own ſuperior wiſdom or power, it might be called ſpiritual pride. But when all is aſcribed to the Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, to Him alone is the whole glory given. They only make a juſt eſtimate of their own ſtate, as He hath been pleaſed repeatedly to declare, and ſolemnly confirm it: "For if children, then "heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint-heirs with "CHRIST JESUS." And if his faithful people muſt not believe their ſalvation ſtands abſolutely ſecured upon this ſure foundation, for fear of ſpiritual pride, they muſt, in order to be humble, regard the ſtrongeſt engagements, which GOD Himſelf can give, with doubt and ſuſpicion.

To the charge of wild enthuſiaſm, and ſpiritual pride, againſt thoſe, who maintain the knowledge of Salvation is a privilege of the Chriſtian church, that of blaſphemous preſumption is generally joined; but without cauſe. For when men promiſe great favors, and to exclude the moſt diſtant ground for ſuſpicion, ſtipulate to perform them; who ever calls it preſumption in the parties to whom

the promiſes are made, to conclude all will be fulfilled? We ſhould think this ſtill more unjuſt, when the ability, character, and fidelity of the promiſer, add confirmation to the ſecurity.

If then the moſt High promiſes, covenants, and ſwears by Himſelf, that his people "being "delivered out of the hands of their enemies, "ſhall ſerve Him in holineſs and righteouſ-"neſs before Him, all the days of their life;" can it be blaſphemous preſumption in them to conclude aſſuredly, that He will not falſify his Word, alter his Covenant, and perjure Himſelf, by not beſtowing the promiſed bleſſings upon them?

Again, What ſhould we think if an affectionate parent had not only ſubdued the enemies of his children, but left each of them at his death, by will, a rich inheritance; by a will valid in law, and pleadable by every one of his heirs therein ſpecified? Should we not ſay, it is the intention of the teſtator, that when this will is opened and read to them, they ſhould look upon the eſtate as their own? But ſuch is the caſe of CHRIST and his church, as

ſtated

ſtated at large in holy writ, to help our infirmities in conceiving of ſpiritual things.

" Becauſe the children were partakers of " fleſh and blood, He alſo took part of the " ſame;" and ſhed his blood to confirm to them a teſtamentary right to the legacy He hath bequeathed them; which, for this reaſon, He calls " the blood of the New Teſtament." He is Himſelf " the Mediator of the New " Teſtament, that by means of death, for the " redemption of the tranſgreſſions which were " under the firſt teſtament, they which are " called, might receive the promiſe of eternal " inheritance."

The reality, therefore, of this Will and Teſtament cannot be ſet aſide, without diſgracing our LORD and his Apoſtle, by interpreting away the efficacy of his death. But till this is ſet aſide, it can be no preſumption in the heirs to claim their inheritance under that divine Teſtament, and be certain they ſhall receive it in all its fulneſs.

Should it be ſaid (which, as far as I can underſtand, is the only remaining objection) that none can know they are themſelves the

heirs. I reply, this is an imputation upon the wiſdom and goodneſs of our Maker, almoſt equal to the denial of the Teſtament itſelf. For we read in ſcripture, that GOD has made a Covenant, or Grant unto his people, which ſtands confirmed by his Oath, and ratified by the blood of CHRIST. — All this we read was done, that thoſe who flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope ſet before them in CHRIST JESUS, might have two immutable things to truſt to, and derive from thence a ſtrong conſolation. But how can this be, when no one is to know, that the benefit of this Covenant and Oath belongs to Himſelf? It might full as well have never been given: for how trifling is the difference between no Covenant and Oath, and between a Covenant and Oath to which no one can infallibly lay claim? And this objection is the more reproachful, and the more weak, becauſe the holy Ghoſt, the Spirit of truth, is ſent "to ſeal the faithful to the "day of redemption, and to teach them to "know the things, which are freely given "unto them of GOD." So that if none of the church of CHRIST can know they ſhall be ſaved, then neither the Love, Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of the Father — neither the Life, Death, Interceſſion, and Grace of the Son,

Son, taught and confirmed by the Teſtimony of the holy Spirit, are a ſufficient foundation for the knowledge of Salvation. They cannot be ſafely depended on. Is not this a blaſphemous abſurdity?

Beware, therefore, how you take liberty to abuſe the church of CHRIST, for maintaining their high privilege: ſince in ſo doing, you reflect equal diſhonor on the office each Perſon in the bleſſed Trinity bears in the plan of Salvation. Expoſe with what ſeverity you pleaſe every baſe pretender to this unſpeakable grace, and we will, we do join with you. Men whoſe air and talk bewray forwardneſs and ſelf-conceit, and evil tempers confute their high pretenſions. Object to the making aſſurance of our eternal felicity, or intereſt in CHRIST, eſſential to the faith of a Chriſtian. We will allow the difference between weak and ſtrong believers. But let not the truth itſelf, the glory of the church of CHRIST, the ſuperabundant loving kindneſs of GOD, be denied, reproached, and blaſphemed, on account of many impoſtors. Amidſt the arts of ſubtil diſputants againſt CHRIST, and the miſerable wranglings of profeſſed believers about the meaning of his words, attempt not

to rob humble ſouls of what alone can carry them above all perplexity, the full aſſurance of underſtanding, faith, and hope. Attempt not to bereave the excellent of his flock of their joy in waiting for the dawn of eternity, by telling them, aſſurance is wild enthuſiaſm, and ſpiritual pride. Level not the children of light and of the day, with hypocrites and infidels in this moſt intereſting matter, the *knowledge* of their future allotment. Nor go on to encourage all lazy, ignorant, wicked profeſſors of Chriſtianity with this ſoothing falſhood, that none upon earth know that their ſins are forgiven, and their ſouls ſhall be ſaved.

You cannot oppoſe the doctrine of the full aſſurance of faith, without maintaining it is for the honor of GOD, and the good of men, that upright Chriſtians ſhould remain in darkneſs, or doubt; contrary to what has been proved by ſcripture teſtimony.

I would proceed one ſtep further, and intreat you to examine, whence ſuch violent prejudice againſt the knowledge of Salvation takes its riſe? Not from good-will to men —becauſe the lot of humanity, calls loudly for ſuch a healing balm, for ſuch refuge in life

life and death; — not from zeal for GOD, or the honor of his word, becauſe this exceedingly exalts the grace of GOD, and unſpeakably enhances the value of Revelation; — not from a well-informed regard for holy practice, becauſe the holieſt of men poſſeſſed the knowledge of Salvation themſelves, and earneſtly urged all whom they taught, "to make their "calling and election *ſure*." But if violent prejudice againſt this doctrine, cannot take its riſe either from love to GOD, or man, or holineſs, beware it does not ſpring from a deſire to pacify conſcience alarmed with the report, that others are ſo much more favored than yourſelf; or from groſs ignorance, not having devoutly ſearched the Oracles of GOD; or from envy, which cannot allow thoſe privileges to be poſſeſſed by another, which we poſſeſs not ourſelves.

CHAP. XXIV.

On the abuſe of the Covenant of Grace.

THE doctrine of this Prophecy, proves the fatal miſtake of many religious profeſſors. They juſtly affirm, that the Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of GOD, are an infallible ſecurity, that not one of the Elect ſhall periſh. But at the ſame time, they ſeem ſtrangely reſerved and cool upon the point of ſerving the LORD "in holineſs and righteouſneſs before "Him all the days of their life:"—As if this was not as much ſecured, the means as the end, and no leſs a bleſſing. They will ſpeak perpetually of the infirmities, ſpots, and falls of the Elect; ſo that one is at a loſs to diſcern any holineſs in them, or any benefit they derive from CHRIST, except that of eſcaping the flames of hell at laſt.

This is a miſtake, which it behoves every preacher and hearer of the Doctrines of Grace carefully to avoid, and zealouſly oppoſe; becauſe it is very common to charge both with

both with weakening the obligations to obedience, and making CHRIST a minister of sin. — And where the Doctrines of Grace are taught, Satan has no other resource to uphold his tottering throne, than that of beguiling men to imagine the everlasting Covenant will afford protection, if not to Antinomian rebellion, yet to carelessness, formality, and sloth. At the same time it must be confessed, that from the Apostles days to our own, this utmost stretch of human depravity has appeared, wherever the scripture-doctrines have been maintained. Some of the most false, proud, lewd, covetous, and oppressive of mankind, each practising his iniquity till death, have been fierce advocates for the everlasting Covenant, though enjoying not one blessing from it.

It is necessary on all these accounts, to alledge several proofs that every religious professor, who fancies himself excused in any degree from serving the LORD " in holiness and " righteousness," under pretence of being safe in the everlasting Covenant, is a miserable self-deceiver, an hypocrite, and traitor in the church of CHRIST, against various indisputable testimonies of his guilt and prevarication.

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He is thus guilty againſt the plaineſt teſtimony of the Covenant itſelf, of which he makes his odious boaſt; for this is *holy* — an abſolute grant of knowledge, power, and grace to his people, enabling them to ſerve the LORD acceptably.—"I will put my laws "into their mind, and write them in their "hearts.—They ſhall be to me a people, and "I will be to them a GOD."—Wherefore the circumſtance of ſlightly regarding perſonal obedience, inſtantly ſtamps a man's character, no leſs than calling JESUS accurſed. — It proves him to be an alien to the Covenant; — it convicts him of impoſture upon the ſpot, in laying claim to that divine grant, which is the promiſe and certain means of ſanctification, himſelf remaining unſanctified.

The *end and deſign* alſo of the Covenant and Oath, no leſs than their nature, bear clear teſtimony againſt ſuch a religious profeſſor, as an hypocrite. For both are proofs of the immutable purpoſe of GOD, to ſave his people in a way of holineſs, which proofs they greatly need. To them, Sin is the greateſt evil. — They walk in a ſteep and ſlippery path, beſet with ſnares, and infeſted with watchful, cruel foes. So that they would be utterly

utterly disheartened, through the grievousness of the way, were they not comforted by gracious engagements from GOD in their behalf. All dependence, therefore, upon the Covenant and Oath, for any other purpose or view, than to serve the LORD with full assurance of success, is a barefaced perversion of the express design for which both were revealed. It is like perverting the proclamation of Salvation in CHRIST, the grand encouragement for sinners to return to GOD, into a reason to hope for Salvation, though we never return to Him at all.

The Covenant and Oath were given for the benefit of brave soldiers, to make them continue such, not to skreen one scoundrel coward; — to chear true-hearted, manly sufferers for the sake of their Commander. What is this to a traitor, who holds correspondence with his foes, and favors them? Such an one is proved *upon the clearest evidence* an impostor, when he pretends to trust in the Covenant, and should be treated accordingly.

Religious professors of this cast deceive themselves, in contradiction to the practice of the most excellent, who have received the

Covenant

Covenant and Oath of GOD, as an infallible ſecurity to his church, that they ſhould be ſaved. Who ſpeaks ſo fully on the high ſubjects of Predeſtination and Election, from whence the Covenant ſprings, as St *Paul?* But did He ſlight perſonal obedience? Did He watch, did he pray, did he mortify ſin, or labor leſs in the ſervice of his LORD, on *this* account? Did He not appeal to the witneſſes of his life, and the ſearcher of his heart, how holily, how juſtly, how unblameably He behaved?

What uſe did the primitive believers make of the Election of Grace, and of the everlaſting Covenant, which St *Paul* preached? Did they think ſlightly of perſonal obedience? On the contrary, ſee how he exults in the ſanctifying virtue of this doctrine.—The believers at *Rome* were ſpoken of, he tells us, through all the Chriſtian ſocieties in the empire, for the obedience of their faith. And he returns ardent thanks to GOD for the churches of *Theſſalonica*, which were his glory, and examples to all them that believed in *Macedonia* and *Achaia*.

There are great numbers alſo to this hour, who reap the ſame glorious advantage from the

the everlaſting Covenant.—Their diſcourſe is profitable and animating; their watchfulneſs and ſelf-denial, ſtriking; their cordial regard to the duties of their ſtation, and their humility, beautiful in the eyes of all around them.

Now either theſe venerable witneſſes did not underſtand the nature, deſign, and end of the everlaſting Covenant, or every careleſs profeſſor of faith in it, muſt groſly deceive himſelf, muſt be full of hypocriſy.

Such an unhappy miſtake is alſo made againſt the teſtimony of Conſcience, which can enjoy no peace with God, but in obedience to his will. For, though ſome evil workers boldly affirm the Covenant is their ſure protection, no *lively* hope ſprings from hence. —It may ſtupify, like falſe dependence on the infinite mercy of God, ſo common in the world—but it can do no more; becauſe the Bible is the pretended warrant, from whence ſuch hypocrites would draw this concluſion in their own favor. But the Bible denounces wrath againſt all workers of iniquity, in terms to the full as plain, as thoſe which aſſert the infallible ſalvation of the Elect. Now it is not in the power of man ſo firmly to believe one part of the Book of God, as

from

from thence to be *eaſy* with reſpect to eternity; and yet ſo firmly diſbelieve at the ſame time, another part of the ſame unerring volume, as not to dread the wrath it denounces to our condemnation. — Beſides, peace of conſcience is the gift of GOD, which hypocrites can never receive: becauſe He is of purer eyes than to dwell with evil. He ever frowns upon the rebellious, and under that frown, every heart not hardened to perdition, muſt ach.

Even large experience of his love, joined to clear knowledge of the adorable plan of Salvation, makes no difference at all in this matter. No ſooner can ſin be deliberately committed by thoſe who are juſtified, and ſhall certainly be ſaved, than the ſoul inſtantly ſuffers, as the body does by a ſtroke of the palſy. The divine preſence withdraws, the love and glory of CHRIST become obſcured; — condemnation fills the conſcience. The hands which would now lay hold on the Covenant, ſhake and tremble: — diſtreſſing doubts and fears, whether all paſt experience has not been a deluſion, ſtrongly aſſail the mind. Prayer is without acceſs to GOD, or any comfort, till brokenneſs of heart begins, and ſincere lamentation for the offence, till the LORD has been often

and

and earneſtly beſought to heal the backſliding, and reſtore comfort to the mourner.

All theſe particulars we read in the caſe of ſcripture ſaints, after they had been overtaken with a fault.—We find them recorded in the lives of the moſt excellent;—and they are experienced by every member of CHRIST, whenever betrayed or ſuprized into any evil thing, contrary to the tenor of his upright conduct.

And till GOD ceaſes to be holy, to be jealous, to love his people, and promote their intereſt, theſe things muſt be ſo. Otherwiſe, He would encourage them to deſpiſe his holy authority, and lightly regard committing, what his ſoul abhorreth. Conſequently, all religious profeſſors who trifle with ſin, or think little of the abſolute neceſſity of bringing forth fruit unto holineſs, under pretence that they are ſafe in the Covenant, either know nothing of the grievous ſelf-reproach and diſtreſs which ingenuous minds feel upon offending GOD; or foaming out their own ſhame, ſpeak as if there was no other reaſon to refrain from ſin, than to eſcape the miſery of hell. Provided therefore infernal miſery can be avoided, it is of ſmall moment, whether

GOD

GOD be pleaſed or provoked. Is not this the very ſentiment and temper of an hypocrite unmaſked?

Such religious Profeſſors deceive themſelves againſt the cleareſt teſtimony of the abſolute neceſſity of perſonal holineſs, in order to enjoy heaven itſelf. All pleaſure ſprings from ſuitableneſs in the object, to the faculty which it gratifies. Sounds full of ſweeteſt melody can give no pleaſure to the palate, nor delicious food to the ear, from want of this correſpondence. For the very ſame reaſon, a place of perfect purity, cannot poſſibly yield ſatisfaction to the unclean. The preſence of holy angels, and an holy GOD, have nothing in them to pleaſe ſuch fallen ſpirits, but all to confound them. We ſee ſome, *even upon earth*, ſo divinely changed, that the ſlaves of ſin are under reſtraint and awe before them. What then muſt be the effect of infinite ſanctity? There can be no paſſage from a ſtate of natural depravity, to an immediate poſſeſſion of glory. Sinners muſt firſt come as living ſtones, and be built up in CHRIST, a ſpiritual houſe, an holy prieſthood to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to GOD by Him: in which holy education, the very temper

per and conſtitution of heaven is obtained. The whole ſcripture teaches this truth, but never more clearly, than in the paſſages which aſſert the doctrine of Predeſtination. In one, believers are ſaid to be "choſen before the "foundation of the world, that they might "be holy:" In another, that they are "pre-"deſtinated to be conformed to the image of "CHRIST:"—In a third, that "thoſe whom "GOD foreknew, are choſen, through ſanctifi-"cation of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." So that as the faculty of reaſon is neceſſary to qualify men for communion in ſociety, no leſs neceſſary is love of righteouſneſs, and hatred of iniquity, "to make them meet for "the inheritance of the ſaints in light."

The ſcripture affirms, *I allow*, that there is a very wide difference, amongſt the members of CHRIST, in the degrees of their perſonal obedience. Some bring forth an hundredfold, ſome only thirty. Yet all poſſeſs excellent knowledge, lively faith, and love unfeigned, from which they conſcientiouſly obey.

Hence perſonal obedience, is conſtantly declared to be the diſtinguiſhing mark of the people of GOD. See how their excellent character is drawn in the 119th *Pſalm*. "They

" are undefiled in the way, and walk in the " law of the LORD:—They ſeek Him with " their whole heart:—They do no iniquity: " They eſteem all GOD's precepts concerning " all things to be right, and hate every falſe " way." There would be no end of repeating teſtimonies from all the prophets, that " the way of the Juſt is uprightneſs."

But let us hear the Savior Himſelf:—" If " any man love me, he will keep my words." He will not only talk of my glory, or ſhed tears at the relation of my ſorrows, which the vileſt have been known to do, but he will reverence my authority; and, as my friend, do whatſoever I command him.

What impudent impoſtors then ought thoſe religious profeſſors ever to be accounted, who, like *Judas*, eat and drink at the LORD's table, profeſs to have the cleareſt light and knowledge of his will, and then ſay, or ſeem to ſay, that ſin in the Elect, is a matter not greatly to be abhorred.

Such religious profeſſors deceive themſelves, againſt ſtrong evidence of the miſery inſeparable from known tranſgreſſion. To live in the breach of any commandment of GOD, is neceſſarily

neceſſarily to be wretched; — becauſe every one of them is given *only* for our good always. Obedience to Him in faith, humility, and love; in meekneſs, patience, and entire reſignation; in mercy and kindneſs to every creature, are all peaceful, pleaſing ſenſations; their oppoſites irkſome to bear. Perſeverance and watchfulneſs in earneſt prayer, diligence in ſearching the ſcripture, and uſing every means of grace, cauſe the faithful to abound in ſpiritual bleſſings, as vernal ſhowers cover the earth with plenteous fruits. On the contrary, from lazineſs, formality, or levity, we become barren, confuſed, and dark in our minds; unable to withſtand temptation; — unable to bear the croſs, and ſtrangers to all delight in GOD.

Let the moſt exemplary Chriſtian give way to paſſion, or defile himſelf by laſciviouſneſs; let him do an unjuſt thing for gain, or neglect ſtated prayer in ſecret; preſently a melancholy change will be perceived by others, or felt at leaſt in his own ſoul. He will neither be able to ſpeak for GOD, or pray to him, as he was wont to do. The Election of Grace, the Covenant and Oath of GOD, neither prevent nor diminiſh theſe dreadful effects, which

follow, and punish wilful disobedience in every degree.

And can you be satisfied in such a state of soul? Suppose you had a patent from heaven, that you should certainly be saved twenty years hence; but from this hour should know no communion with God in fervent prayer, in deep humiliation for sin, in joyful gratitude for his mercies, in love and obedience without dissimulation.—On the contrary, that you should remain proud, impatient, passionate, obscene;—a miser or a drunkard, a murmurer and complainer, or an idle consumer of your precious time, till a few days before you expired. Would it please you to receive salvation in this no legal way, rather than "in "holiness and righteousness before the LORD "all the days of your life?" No one upon earth has face enough, I should think, to avow so shameful a choice. Yet know, that if any branch of personal obedience, or means of attaining higher degrees of holiness, which God has appointed, be by you despised, presuming on the Covenant and Oath of God in behalf of his Elect, this is actually in a measure your own choice.

But

But if none of these proofs, already advanced against self-deceiving professors of religion, who abuse the doctrines of Grace, are regarded, there is still one consideration to be addressed to their self-love. Such persons pretend they are confident of their safety. Yet they cannot be safe, until the Judge of all becomes changeable, as we are: for his whole mind on this head is fully revealed; there is no room left for a doubt. Whom does He compare to the stony ground, and to the seed sown among thorns; to foolish virgins, and slothful servants? Professors of faith in his name, who were weak and wicked enough to imagine, his grace would prove a sanctuary to protect them from the punishment of their sins, although continued in from this false confidence. To make this delusion appear the more dangerous, our Lord Himself draws the character of some eminent professors of faith and ministers, in his church. They were men, who wrought miracles before the unbelieving world, to glorify his name, and enlarge his kingdom.—Yet these splendid gifts, so beneficial to others, do not prevent the loss of their own souls. When they plead in the great day, "Have we not prophesied in thy "name, and in thy name cast out devils, and

" in thy name done many mighty works?
" Then will I declare unto them, ſaith the
" LORD, I never knew you, depart frome me,
" ye workers of iniquity."

How deciſive a proof is this ſcripture, were there no other, that we cheriſh a fatal preſumption, when we plead the everlaſting Covenant in excuſe for unfruitfulneſs in the ſervice of GOD! No, if we cannot appeal to Him, that we watch, and pray, and keep his commandments, our hearts are falſe.—We hear before our trial, what muſt be our doom. Neither can we believe the words of the LORD, thus plain and peremptory, yet fancy ourſelves amongſt the Elect: for a wicked or an idle ſervant, is a contradiction to every character given of *them* by the holy Ghoſt.

Whenever, therefore, upon profeſſing to be convinced of the truth of the doctrines of Grace, you entertain ſlight notions of the abſolute neceſſity of holineſs, begin to neglect ſecret prayer, or uſe the means of Grace, without prizing them highly;—whenever you delight to hear of final perſeverance, and finiſhed ſalvation, but feel ſecret diſguſt when urged to "preſent yourſelves a living ſacri-

" fice

" fice unto GOD;" be assured you grosly mistake the nature, — you pervert the design of of the holy Covenant. Cry to GOD, if the thoughts of your heart may be forgiven.

Thus the fatal mistake, too often found amongst religious professors, who receive the scripture-doctrines of Predestination and Election, but disregard personal obedience, stands confuted upon their own principles. Since upon these principles, such a construction of the everlasting Covenant, is a flagrant contradiction to the testimony of conscience; to the essential character of a disciple of CHRIST; to the generation of the faithful in all ages; and must certainly, if persisted in to the last, bring on everlasting destruction, according to our LORD's declarations. These various proofs are not to be resisted, but by that hypocrisy, which is capable of abusing, and turning into poison, every scheme of religion which GOD can propose.

These proofs of the absolute necessity of holiness, in full consistency with the doctrines of Grace, sufficiently secure obedience; — because by these proofs, CHRIST and his Apostles, confront and expose hypocrites. — They

do not ever, as I remember, deny, that the church of CHRIST is accepted in Him, and compleat; juſtified through faith once for all, without the deeds of the law. In this manner, they defended the truth againſt all charges of licentiouſneſs, which, from the beginning, were brought againſt it.

And every other ſcheme for promoting holineſs, will do, *in the end*, much more miſchief than ſervice to the cauſe of holineſs. For every other ſcheme, eſtabliſhes the old Covenant upon the ruins of the new;—makes the righteouſneſs of faith, give place to the righteouſneſs of the law;—deeply ſhades the glory of the Redeemer's life and death;—robs his church of the ſtrongeſt and pureſt motives to obedience; and, *in the concluſion*, as certainly overthrows the goſpel, as Antinomian blaſphemy itſelf. The only difference between the Popiſh doctrine of a ſecond juſtification by works, and Antinomian abuſe of the doctrines of Grace, the two extremes, lies here: —The plan of a ſecond final juſtification by works, produces an apoſtacy from CHRIST by ſlow degrees and fair appearances, thus beguiling the ſimple. Antinomians, with their heaven-daring falſhoods, too groſs for any but abandoned

abandoned hypocrites to bear, ſtab the goſpel to the heart at once, in the face of the ſun.

CHAP. XXV.

On the error of exalting Morality, to the diſparagement of Faith and Holineſs.

THE doctrine of this Prophecy, proves clearly this fatal miſtake. Yet what confident pretenſions to merit! What ſelf-ſatisfaction do we ſee many take in the ſuppoſed ſufficiency of honeſty and benevolence, who, notwithſtanding, poſſeſs but a very ſmall ſhare of theſe excellent qualities:—inſenſible, it ſeems, that Moraliſts (as they affect to call themſelves) who ſerve not the LORD in holineſs, are of all men moſt *unjuſt*, are enemies to mankind in ſeveral capital reſpects; direct oppoſers of GOD; and incapable of admiſſion into heaven, without an entire change of heart.

Profane moraliſts are the moſt unjuſt of men;—becauſe the higheſt degree of injuſtice,

juſtice, is to defraud our greateſt Benefactor. But our greateſt Benefactor, beyond compariſon, is the giver of all we enjoy, and of our every capacity for happineſs. Wherefore adoration, eſteem, gratitude, humiliation for every offence committed againſt Him, with ſupreme love, are *the things which are* GOD's; —due to Him by an indefeaſible right, poſitively required from us all. When the Jews of old, withheld from Him the tithes and offerings which were demanded to ſupport the temple-ſervice, where the GOD of *Iſrael* was worſhipped, He accuſed them in theſe forcible terms:—"Will a man rob GOD? yet this "whole nation hath robbed me."—But if this was robbery of GOD, what is it to annihilate the firſt and great commandment, under pretence that cordial regard to the temporal welfare of our fellow-creatures is ſufficient? To every perſon who holds this miſtake, we may ſay with the utmoſt propriety, —"Thou that abhorreſt injuſtice, doſt thou commit ſacrilege? How ridiculous are all thy pretenſions to an high regard for moral conduct, when thou thyſelf liveſt in the commiſſion of the baſeſt theft any creature can commit, that of robbing GOD, and teaching others

to

to do the ſame, yet account themſelves good men!"

I prove further, that *Moraliſts*, by extolling honeſty and benevolence, to the diſparagement of faith and holineſs, are *Enemies* to mankind in ſeveral capital reſpects: — Enemies, by keeping them in groſs ignorance of GOD, his works, his goſpel and ſalvation, as if theſe things were of no conſequence;—in teaching them to deſpiſe devotion, the ſource of the beſt pleaſures we can know on earth: without which, every advantage of nature or ſtation, is apt to puff up; proſperity to intoxicate; and extreme adverſity, to plunge into deſperation:—without which, ſolitude proves very irkſome; ſociety, full of contention; and every condition of life, diſſatisfying: — without which, men of all ranks and orders, are forced to fly to childiſh ſports, to mean, deſpicable, wicked ways of conſuming their ſhort term of life, allotted for nobler purpoſes.

See your claim, O ye irreligious moraliſts, to be called benevolent towards your fellow-creatures, conſidered as individuals; ſo cruel is your boaſted compaſſion.

Conſidering

Conſidering them as members of a community, your maxims and practice are in a ſtill greater degree pernicious: for every ſociety under heaven ſuffers much from the wily and powerful; — becauſe without higher ſanction, human laws are eaſily evaded in a thouſand inſtances. Againſt this calamity, the fear and love of GOD are our ſole defence. — Where theſe govern, no wrong will be done to man. The whole Creation immediately becomes an object highly reſpectable, as the workmanſhip of GOD, whoſe will is, that none ſhould hurt or deſtroy. Pour contempt on devotional duties, the heaven-appointed means of producing and maintaining the fear and love of GOD, you leave ſociety (notwithſtanding your own benevolent example) defenceleſs againſt the aſſaults of our worſt paſſions;—paſſions, which fill the world with injured women, forced into proſtitution for a morſel of bread;—with the cries of defrauded orphans and widows; — with quarrels, enmity, and bloodſhed: — for luſt, covetouſneſs, and revenge, will ſeldom be quelled, but by devout ſupplications to GOD; nor evil deſires, the ſeed of evil actions, reſiſted, but by thoſe who have conſcience toward Him. What amends then, can the ſtricteſt regard to equity in your own dealings, or the

the moſt generous acts of pecuniary benevolence make to ſociety, for immenſe miſchiefs, ſure to follow from ſlighting religious principle, as if it was a ſuperfluous motive to be good. Do you exclaim in the warmth of your benevolence againſt doing wrong to a ſingle fellow-creature, and yet prove a malignant to ſociety itſelf, by tearing up the very foundations on which all reſtraints of conſcience, reſpecting GOD, are eſtabliſhed? I mean, devotional duties.

Beſides, when we conſider our real condition as a race of ſinful creatures, who can be reconciled to GOD, and ſaved only in the way which he hath appointed, profane Moraliſts will be found injurious to mankind, infinitely above the fraudulent and villainous.—Theſe we naturally guard againſt and deteſt, though they can only hurt us in our preſent tranſient property;—but profaneneſs brings on the ruin of our immortal ſouls, by denying, or deſpiſing the command to live a life of faith and holineſs.—Moraliſts, by affecting to know no duty beyond juſtice and benevolence, eraſe from the mind of all who regard them, a ſenſe of GOD's government over us.—They teach us to imagine, that faith and devotion belong

belong only to weak bigots.—They lead us to deny every the moſt important truth He hath revealed; thus rendering us by our profaneneſs, eternally incapable of admiſſion into that world, where GOD is all in all.

What the end of theſe Moraliſts muſt be, unleſs they are converted into devout Chriſtians, a character they now hold in contempt, judge ye, after obſerving their direct contradiction to the dictates of GOD.

He commands all his people to pray in ſecret; to pray always; to worſhip Him, and diligently ſearch the ſcripture.—Moraliſts are confident there is no need of ſo much religion; becauſe men may be very good, without any devotion at all. He dwells upon the abſolute neceſſity of faith, aſcribes to this grace a kind of omnipotence, connecting with it everlaſting ſalvation. — Moraliſts violently diſlike laying ſuch a ſtreſs upon believing. They ſubſtitute, therefore, honeſty and benevolence in its place, eſteeming theſe virtues quite ſufficient. He, by every turn of expreſſion which can alarm conſcience, or perſuade, claims ſupreme love to Himſelf, as the firſt inſtance of duty; pronounces every man, deſtitute of this

divine

divine affection, accurſed; ſtrictly charging us, "whether we eat or drink, or whatever "we do, to do all to the glory of GOD." Moraliſts ſneer at the malediction — naufeate ſo much piety — reproach the terms as being unintelligible; aſking, what is meant by the glory of GOD? — and ſuppoſe Him more honored by *their moral conduct*, than by all the prayers and acts of faith in all the ſaints, ſince the world was made.

Hence it is evident, that whilſt other ſins are no more than a breach of ſome particular branch of duty, profaneneſs deſpiſes the great object of all. Whilſt other ſins are ſo many attacks upon different parts of the divine law, profaneneſs ſubverts the authority of the whole. —Conſequently there cannot be a greater oppoſition, than is found in Moraliſts, (as they call themſelves) to the majeſty and will of GOD; to his truth and ordinances; to the temper of the church on earth, and of the whole company in heaven. None, therefore, can be farther from ſalvation, none in a ſtate more incapable of admiſſion into the world of everlaſting piety and devotion.

That ſo heavy a charge, ſhould really ſtand in force againſt ſome of the moſt admired

mixed characters among men of the world, is a melancholy reflection. It is more ſo, that many who call themſelves Chriſtians, ſhould be fatally deceived to conclude, ſtrict integrity, and warm benevolence, the whole duty of man.

Let ſuch very ſuperficial thinkers, learn to examine, by the touchſtone of truth, from whence actions proceed, and their natural tendency.—Then, they will no longer moſt irrationally conclude, *any* action can be truly good, where the *principle* is eſſentially defective; or any quality in an object *lovely*, which, upon the whole, proves exceedingly injurious to GOD and man. — How comes the Savior to join the doctrine of the Sadducees with that of the Phariſees? To teach us, that ſelf-ſufficient moraliſts, and devout cheats, are criminals alike: —that prayerleſs honeſt men, and hymn-ſinging villains, are much more nearly related, than either will chooſe to believe.—For which cauſe, the ſame perdition is reſerved for hypocrites and unbelievers.

Whenever, therefore, you obſerve a man deſpiſing the houſe and day of GOD; ſpeaking

ing in terms diſhonorable to true devotion and holineſs of life, priding himſelf at the ſame time in his own favorite ſentiment, that an honeſt man, is the nobleſt work of GOD, —pity and pray for him. Be not dazzled by the amiableneſs of his natural temper, ſtrict adherence to juſtice, tender humanity, and uncommon benevolence.—Eſteem not a profane moraliſt, on account of theſe ſtriking qualities, either worthy or innocent, a *good member of ſociety*, much leſs a Chriſtian. Becauſe theſe qualities (charming indeed as they are) only enable him to do the more miſchief, like vaſt abilities, and boundleſs generoſity in ſome mover of ſedition. *In him* ſuch virtues are a grievous misfortune to the public: for they put it in his power to ſpread the baneful infection of profaneneſs. They make him appear to undiſcerning eyes, a noble friend to his fellow-creatures, whilſt his principles and maxims undermine the welfare of ſociety, and continually militate againſt the preſent, againſt the eternal intereſt of every individual, againſt GOD, and his CHRIST.

CHAP. XXVI.

On JOHN *the Baptiſt.*

WE have contemplated the grand idea which *Zacharias*, full of the holy Ghoſt, hath taught us to conceive of CHRIST. He is the Horn of Salvation, the principal ſubject of all prophecy;—the only hope of the fathers and the faithful before his incarnation;—the Deliverer of them, and all his people, out of the hands of their enemies, through the virtue of his life, death, and mediation, according to the Promiſe, Covenant, and Oath of JEHOVAH.

After ſo compleat a diſplay of the adorable plan of ſalvation, *Zacharias*, ſtill under the ſame unerring direction, turns his eyes upon his own ſon, a new-born infant.—Faith, adoration of the divine goodneſs, and holy joy lighted up his aged venerable countenance, whilſt he fixes the attention of the church upon his illuſtrious offspring as the immediate forerunner of the Meſſiah, and the firſt *preacher* of the glories of his name, after his manifeſtation in the fleſh.

"And

" And Thou, child, ſhalt be called the Pro-
" phet of the Higheſt; — for Thou ſhalt go
" before the face of the LORD, to prepare
" his ways: —

" To give knowledge of ſalvation unto his
" people by the remiſſion of their ſins: —

" Through the tender mercy of our GOD,
" whereby the day-ſpring from on high hath
" viſited us: to give light to them that ſit in
" darkneſs, and in the ſhadow of death; to
" guide our feet into the way of peace."

The concluſion of this Prophecy, naturally leads us to conſider the character and miſſion of the Baptiſt; the doctrine he preached, his addreſs, and the effect of the whole upon his hearers.

The LORD teſtifies of Him, that " among
" them that are born of women, there had
" not riſen a greater than *John* the Baptiſt."
—Marvellous are the things related concerning Him. Like *Iſaac*, He derived his exiſtence from a miracle. His appearance, office, and ſpirit, were delineated many ages previous to his birth. — *An angel was ſent down from heaven, immediately before Elizabeth con-*

ceived Him, to notify this event was at hand, to declare his ſanctification from the womb, and the great ſucceſs which ſhould attend his miniſtry. No perſon, excepting the Savior Himſelf, was ever ſo greatly diſtinguiſhed. Yet the glory thrown round the Baptiſt, by theſe things, was deſigned to draw upon Him the eyes of all the inhabitants of *Judea* and *Jeruſalem*, that the record He gave of CHRIST, might ſpread the wider, and ſink the deeper into the minds of men.

After having lived under the tuition of the beſt of parents; after employing himſelf, as we muſt conclude, in meditation and prayer; and in the contemplation of GOD, and intimate communion with Him, being filled with the holy Ghoſt from his birth; after this fit preparation for his future high employment, —when He was near thirty years of age, the Word of GOD, probably an audible voice, ſuch as *Samuel* and the prophets uſed to hear, came to *John*. For this He waited, not preſuming to enter upon the miniſtry, at the impulſe of his own inclination, or zeal. This was his authentic appointment, and the ſeal of his miſſion, which was to declare the promiſed Meſſiah now ſtood in the midſt of them,

was

— was come immediately to erect a ſpiritual everlaſting kingdom; and to prepare them for admiſſion into it, was the buſineſs on which He himſelf was ſent.

The Baptiſt's habit was quite ruſtic, reſembling that of the ancient prophets, made of camels hair, bound round Him with a leathern girdle. His fare was coarſe, ſuch as the pooreſt of the people ate, locuſts and wild honey. So ſeldom did he join in ſocial meetings, ſo great a lover was He of retirement, and engaged with ſuch ardor in his ſacred employ, that the pleaſure-loving world ſaid, *He had a devil:* that is, was a mope, mad with religion. Yet far from aſſuming at all, upon the ſanctity of his life, He was clothed with humility, comparing Himſelf to a voice, which, after it conveys the ſpeaker's mind, has no being. *Herod*, though a prince; a prince enſlaved to lewdneſs; a prince hardened in villainy; could not reſiſt the impreſſion of the Baptiſt's life. — He was forced for a time to fear *John*, whom all men knew to be a prophet, and he himſelf to be a holy man, and a juſt. Even the Searcher of hearts declared, that whilſt his doctrine imparted divine knowledge, his life was a flame of af-

fection to GOD and men. He was a *burning and a ſhining light.*

Thus furniſhed in the richeſt manner, for his office, by the grace and gifts of the holy Ghoſt, the child of *Zacharias*, " the Prophet " of the Higheſt, goes before the face of the " LORD, to prepare his ways."

The angel had affirmed as much. " Many " of the children of *Iſrael*, ſaid *Gabriel*, ſhall " He turn to the LORD GOD; and He ſhall " go before his face, in the ſpirit and power " of *Elias*, to turn the hearts of the fathers to " the children, and the diſobedient to the " wiſdom of the juſt; to make ready a peo- " ple prepared for the LORD." Here it is plain, that the LORD, the GOD of the children of *Iſrael*, and the Higheſt, ſignify the ſame individual perſon. But theſe names, the inſpired writers never give to any but the true GOD. If then they are actually given unto CHRIST, the ſcripture compels us to confeſs, *He* is the moſt high GOD, the LORD GOD of *Iſrael*; conſequently one with the Father.— That theſe names are given to *Him*, is undeniable: for He, before whoſe face *John* was to go, the angel calls, the LORD GOD — *Zacharias* calls the Higheſt, and the LORD :— but

but, according to *John*'s confeſſion, and as the event proves, He did not go before the face of the Father, but of CHRIST. — "I in- "deed baptize you with water unto repent- "ance, *but He that cometh after me*, ſhall bap- "tize you with the holy Ghoſt, and with "fire."

Immediately *before* CHRIST, *John* was to go, to prepare his ways.

When an earthly monarch begins his march to take poſſeſſion of a capital city, won by his arms, or deſcending to him by inheritance, his troops go before to remove every obſtacle in the road. The ſteep hills, they level; the low places, they fill up; the circling path, they make ſtraight; the craggy places, plain. All this labor is abſolutely needful, when the way leads through a deſert. In the prophetic ſtyle, the mind of man in its natural ſtate, is this deſert; — a dreary, rocky waſte, without one cultivated field, or fruitful tree to chear the eye. In ſuch a ſtate, the Jews notoriouſly were, when the LORD GOD came to his people. Groſs ignorance, pride, ſuperſtition, and infidelity, blocked up the way of the Prince of peace into their hearts; and rooted prejudices from ſelf-love, like mountains and rocks, forbad his acceſs. To

remove them all, *John* was ſent immediately before his face. And if we ſurvey the ſpiritual ſtate of the inhabitants of *Judea* and *Jeruſalem* at this time, and the doctrine the Baptiſt preached, we ſhall ſee the very ſame obſtructions, which prevail in all places and times againſt the reception of CHRIST, with the only effectual method to remove them in any degree.

When the LORD came to his temple at *Jeruſalem*, the party of greateſt name for religion and authority, were the Phariſees; of which there were two ſorts. The firſt were zealous, from a principle of conſcience, for all the ceremonies of the law, and traditions of the elders;—paying an external obedience to the commandments of GOD, and taking much pains to ſave their ſouls. It is evident this muſt have been their character, from the high reſpect they obtained; from the Phariſee deſcribed by our LORD in the parable; from St *Paul*'s manner of life before his converſion; from the teſtimony he bears to many of them, that they were like himſelf, having a zeal for GOD; and from our Savior's declaration, that in putting his apoſtles to death, they would think they *did God good ſervice*.

Yet

Yet with all this form of godlineſs, they were ſitting in darkneſs, and the ſhadow of death, far from the way of peace. They knew neither CHRIST, nor the Father;—themſelves, nor the evil of ſin; — neither the perfection, uſe, and end of the eternal Law publiſhed from mount *Sinai:* nor the meaning of their ſacrifices, nor the ſpirit of their own religion. They were virtuous in their own eyes, truſted in themſelves as righteous, and deſpiſed others. — They imagined they had no need of any better righteouſneſs in the ſight of GOD, to obtain of the remiſſion of their ſins, than what was to be found in their conformity to the letter of the commandment. And of this ſtrictly religious character, were the fierceſt oppoſers of the doctrine of CHRIST, his perſecutors and murderers. Of this character was the apoſtle *Paul*, before his converſion, ſet on fire of hell, yet verily thinking, he "ought to do many things contrary to the "name of JESUS."

But though theſe *ſincere* Phariſees were thus groſly ignorant, they were conceited of their knowledge. With infinite diſdain, they aſked the Teacher from heaven, "Are we blind alſo?"

Add

Add to this, they were elated in common with all the Jews, on account of their deſcent from *Abraham*, their covenant of circumciſion, and ſeparation from the Gentiles, as the peculiar people of GOD.

What a ſhock to every one of their prejudices, what a bold attack upon all their favorite errors, was the preaching of the Baptiſt! What a preparation to make his hearers, who believed his words, ſee their need of the Savior, and depend upon Him wholly! For *John* preached the Baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins; telling them, that all, without difference, muſt ſubmit to this ordinance; publicly confeſſing themſelves ſinners extremely polluted, and no longer go about to juſtify themſelves. That not a temporal conqueror, but a kingdom of divine original, and ſpiritual nature, "the king-"dom of GOD, was at hand;" of which the two grand bleſſings, were, remiſſion of ſins, and the gift of the holy Ghoſt. "That the "Law, their boaſt, was the miniſtration of "death; but grace and truth came by JESUS "CHRIST, the Son of GOD, who is above "all; into whoſe hands all things are given: "—the light of the world—the bridegroom "of the church—the Lamb of GOD, who "taketh

" taketh away the ſin of the world : — Or
" whom whoſoever believeth hath everlaſt-
" ing life ; and he that believeth not, ſhall
" not ſee life ; but the wrath of GOD abideth
" on him."

This clear, full ſublime teſtimony to CHRIST, the Baptiſt publiſhed, and ſo fulfilled the prophecy of his father *Zacharias* concerning Him. " He gave knowledge of ſalvation to the peo-
" ple of GOD ;" not by works of righteouſneſs which men can do, but by the frank forgiveneſs of their immenſe and dreadful debt " by the remiſſion of their ſins :" a remiſſion, proceeding from " the *tender mercy* " of our GOD ;" yet not exerciſed towards them, but through the mediation of " the " day-ſpring from on high," CHRIST JESUS ; diſtinguiſhed by this title, becauſe every communication of divine knowledge comes from Him ; " no man knowing the Father, " but he to whom the Son will reveal Him :" without whoſe teaching, darkneſs reſts upon the mind, as deep ſhades of night cover the earth, till the beams of opening day give light to its inhabitants. — And till CHRIST gives this light, men ſit in darkneſs and the ſhadow of death, condemned priſoners ; and

by

by Him alone, are their feet guided into the way of peace, of reconciliation with GOD, peace of conſcience, and peace with all men.

Behold the ſum and ſubſtance of the Goſpel, proclaimed at once by this meſſenger, "who goes before the face of the LORD, to "prepare his ways!" Behold an abridgment of the whole that JESUS, *Paul*, *Peter*, and *John*, and every faithful ſucceſſor of theirs in the miniſtry, have preached to this hour, — CHRIST the Light, the Atonement, and All the ſalvation of his people. —What a perfect contraſt was this to the religion of the *beſt* ſort of the Phariſees, though bad were the beſt!

With theſe were mixed a large number of hypocrites: Phariſees who did all to be ſeen of men; or ſtill worſe, covered *the moſt villainous practices with a cloke of ſanctity*; — ſtrict in obſerving the traditions and ceremonies of religion, faſting, and "for a pre-"tence making long prayers;" whilſt they totally neglected juſtice, mercy and the love of GOD, and even devoured widows houſes.

Beſides theſe hypocrites, yet of no better character were the *Sadducees*, who believed neither the reſurrection, nor the exiſtence of angel or ſpirit; looking upon religion only

as

as a fit inſtrument to carry on civil government.

When many of theſe, (excited by the religious novelty of a man ſo famous, in the habit and character of an ancient prophet) came to hear the Baptiſt, and ſome of them approached, deſirous, as it ſeems, of being baptized, He immediately turns and addreſſes them. He joins the Phariſees and Sadducees, *in principle totally oppoſite*, as confederates together, and openly brands them both as "a "generation of vipers," full of the deadly poiſon of hypocriſy, malice, and error. He expreſſes his wonder that any ſo hardened as they were, ſhould at all regard his preaching, begin to take warning, and be willing to ſubmit to his baptiſm. Guarding them, therefore, againſt their groſs hypocriſy, and falſe confidences, He calls upon them to "bring "forth fruits meet for repentance.—And "think not to ſay within yourſelves, We have "*Abraham* to our father: for I ſay unto you, "that God is able of theſe ſtones, to raiſe up "children unto *Abraham*. And now alſo is "the ax laid to the root of the tree:—every "tree, therefore, that bringeth not forth good "fruit, is hewn down, and caſt into the "fire:"

" fire :"— that is, the final deſtruction of all deſtitute of faith in CHRIST, and holineſs, the fruit of faith, is at hand; and as certain, as if already executed.

Beſides theſe Phariſees, Sadducees, and Hypocrites, there were multitudes of the poor people, and many Publicans (or Tax-gatherers) men of the moſt abandoned lives, who belonged to no ſect. Theſe heard the Baptiſt to good effect, and juſtified GOD, being baptized of Him; whilſt the Phariſees and Lawyers (or teachers of the Law) rejected the counſel of GOD againſt themſelves, and were not baptized.

To this company, as appears by comparing *Mark* i. 5—8. with *Luke* xiii. 10—16. He ſpake thus:

I, upon your profeſſion of repentance, baptize you with water unto repentance, as I have authority from GOD to do;—and by the ſame authority, I threaten impenitent ſinners with eternal vengeance; and this is all I can do." But He that cometh after me, is migh-" tier than I, whoſe ſhoes I am not worthy " to bear, He ſhall baptize you with the holy " Ghoſt," (which ſhall be given to all them that

that believe on his name) "and with fire*: "Whose fan is in his hand, and He will ga- "ther the wheat," his faithful people, "into "his garner;—but the chaff," all empty professors of his religion, "He will burn with "fire unquenchable." And when these his hearers, who *had* repented, and were baptized confessing their sins, and looking for Him that was to come, doubted whether they might continue in their respective callings, be soldiers and publicans still; and asked him, therefore, with great concern, What *they* should do? He taught them, that they might serve GOD in any station acceptably, by renouncing all those sins, to which from their way of life they were exposed, and by dwelling in love with all their fellow-creatures.

Such *doctrine* the Baptist preached. His *manner* of teaching was with power, not like a lecturer on morals, defining duty, and then leaving the important matter there.—No, He enforced all He taught by the authority of the LORD GOD; by an alarming address to every

* That is, fiery trials. See *Luke* xii. 49, 50.—*Mark* x. 38, 39. And after the word *fire*, the *fan* is added, or the *sifting*, which the faithful preaching of the Gospel produces, as an explication of the word *fire*.

every man's conſcience, in his ſight; dividing and diſtinguiſhing his hearers, according to their peculiar character, and ſtate of ſoul; giving to each his proper inſtruction, and fixing the attention of all upon the ſeparating fan, the ax of almighty vengeance, the unquenchable fire.

His *manner* of delivery, perfectly agreed with the ſolemnity of his ſubject, and added great force to it. It was zealous, vehement, loud, and bold; formed to poſſeſs in a moment every hearer with conviction, that He felt the truth of all He taught; had nothing at heart, but to ſee it ſucceed in the converſion of ſinners to GOD; fearing no conſequences which might follow reſpecting Himſelf, from delivering it without concealment or palliation.

The effect of the whole upon the vaſt concourſe of his hearers was admirable. Many of the moſt notorious offenders, harlots and publicans, our LORD tells us, heard his word, believed, and repented. Many dejected mourners for ſin, were comforted; the poor amongſt the people were rejoiced. Some of the haughty Phariſees, Hypocrites, and Sadducees

ducees were divinely changed. Their miſtakes appeared fatal, their danger imminent, the glory of CHRIST conſpicuous and captivating.

Such ſucceſs, we are certain, muſt attend the Baptiſt's labors, becauſe the angel declared, that "He ſhould turn *many* of the "children of *Iſrael* to the LORD their GOD, "and the hearts of the fathers to the chil-"dren;" putting an end, wherever his word took place, to thoſe bitter quarrels, which are ſo frequently found between neareſt relations.

Such glorious ſucceſs muſt accompany the Baptiſt's preaching to vaſt multitudes, ſince *Zacharias*, full of the holy Ghoſt, declared, that "He ſhould give knowledge of ſalvation "to the people of GOD by the remiſſion of "their ſins; light to them that ſat in dark-"neſs, and the ſhadow of death."

This ſucceſs puts an honor upon the firſt publication of the Goſpel, and was a ſpecimen of its divine efficacy, which, to the end of time, is GOD's appointed means of bringing ſalvation to the loſt.

Indefatigable in these labors of love, the Baptist remained, till the lewd *Herodias* instigated *Herod* to cast Him into prison. And perceiving the uneasy impressions, *John*'s faithful condemnation of their abominable commerce left upon *Herod*'s mind, her cruel jealousy never slept, till *John* was beheaded. Thus, like the prophets of old, "who spake "in the name of the LORD," the Baptist suffered a violent death, for discharging his office, and his conscience. In the mysterious course of providence, a bloody tyrant is suffered, *at the instigation of an adulteress*, to put an end to the inestimable labors of one of the most excellent witnesses for GOD, in the very prime of his days, and height of his usefulness; leaving upon record this fact, that the greatest honor, which can be conferred on those in whom the LORD most delights, is, power to stand forth *before his enemies with such boldness*, as to incur their resentment and persecution, even unto death.

CHAP.

CHAP. XXVII.

On the Divinity of CHRIST.

THE doctrine of this Prophecy proves their fatal error, who degrade CHRIST into a man like ourſelves, or eſteem Him leſs than very GOD: for *Gabriel* calls Him the LORD GOD of *Iſrael*; and *Zacharias*, the LORD, the Higheſt. His hiſtory, from his conception, to the full eſtabliſhment of his church, affords abundant evidence that He is ſo.

Waving, therefore, many ſufficient proofs, more commonly urged as a ſcriptural foundation for this great article of our faith, I ſhall confine myſelf to *his hiſtory*; from thence proving, that all the circumſtances reſpecting his birth, life, and death, are perfectly conſiſtent, if CHRIST be very GOD; all ſtrange and preposterous to the laſt degree, ſuppoſing Him to be in his nature infinitely inferior.

After having been for near four thouſand years the principal ſubject of all prophecy, in the fulneſs of time, CHRIST is conceived of the bleſſed Virgin, by the overſhadowing

power of the holy Ghoſt. Soon after, *Mary* goes to ſalute her couſin *Elizabeth*. *And it came to paſs, when Elizabeth heard the ſalutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the holy Ghoſt, and ſaid, Whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord ſhould come to me?* The ſolemnity of the occaſion, and the perſon dictating this queſtion to *Elizabeth*, makes it the more memorable and weighty. If by the expreſſion, *my* LORD, *Elizabeth* meant only a man like ourſelves, how was it any condeſcenſion, that her near relation, the mother of one mere man, ſhould come to ſalute the mother of another mere man? But if *Mary* was really the mother of *Elizabeth*'s LORD and *Maker*, according to the fleſh, there was then cauſe ſufficient for all her admiration.

The circumſtances of the birth of CHRIST, ſtrongly prove this was the truth. For it is honored and diſtinguiſhed by prodigies of the nobleſt kind, to which nothing was ever ſeen in the leaſt degree ſimilar. A new luminary, called *his* Star, ſhines in the firmament, appointed to be the miraculous conductor of the *Eaſtern* ſages, to the place where the Child lay, that they might come

and

and *worſhip* Him. Who is no ſooner born, than the angel appears to the ſhepherds, near *Bethlehem*, ſaying unto them, "Behold, I bring "you glad tidings of great joy, which ſhall "be to you, and to *all* people: for unto you "is born this day, in the city of *David*, a "Savior, which is CHRIST, the LORD." Inſtantly at the mention of this divine title, there was with Him, "a multitude of the "heavenly hoſt, praiſing GOD," and expreſſing in their hymn, the grand effects of the Incarnation: "Glory to GOD in the Higheſt, "and on earth peace; good-will towards "men."

We read of no mark of diſtinction of this kind ever attending the birth of a mere mortal. Not *Abraham*'s, though the Father of the faithful;—not the birth of *Moſes*, though he was the mouth of GOD to *Iſrael*, and their Deliverer out of *Egypt*;—not of *Paul*, though an ineſtimable benefactor to the Gentile world. Each of theſe ſtand amongſt the firſt of mere men, yet was their birth unnoticed by any, ſave the little circle of eye-witneſſes to the event. But "when He bringeth his only "begotten Son into the world, He ſaith, Let "all the angels of GOD *worſhip* Him."

Here again every thing is prepoſterous, if He whom all the angels were to worſhip, was more inferior to them in nature, than the moſt ſtupid peaſant is to *Solomon* in wiſdom. And with what truth could *Gabriel* call the infant JESUS, the LORD; or how could He be the object of divine adoration, at his birth, being no more than a man like ourſelves?

Further, The hiſtory of CHRIST, proves He did the works, which are aſcribed to GOD alone; which none of his meſſengers, though empowered to work miracles without number, ever did; that He ſpoke of Himſelf in terms, which it were blaſphemy for any but GOD to uſe;—that the rays of divinity ſhone forth in his Death; and that He did receive on earth, and ſtill receives in heaven, the worſhip due to GOD only. Can He then be leſs than the true GOD?

For inſtance; Power over the winds and ſeas, was never exerciſed by any *mere* man. This is alledged in the Old Teſtament as a deciſive proof, that the GOD of the Jews was the Almighty.—*Pſalm* lxxxix. 8, 9. "O LORD "GOD of Hoſts, who is a ſtrong LORD, like un- "to Thee? or to thy faithfulneſs round about

Thee?

" Thee? Thou ruleſt the raging of the ſea;
" when the waves thereof ariſe, Thou ſtilleſt
" them." *Pſalm* cvii. 25, 26. " For He com-
" mandeth, and raiſeth the ſtormy wind,
" which lifteth up the waves thereof:—They
" mount up to the heaven, they go down
" again to the depths; their ſoul is melted
" becauſe of trouble:—They reel to and fro,
" and ſtagger like a drunken man, and are
" at their wits end. Then they cry unto the
" LORD in their trouble, and He bringeth
" them out of their diſtreſſes. He maketh
" the ſtorm a calm, ſo that the waves thereof
" are ſtill:—Then are they glad, becauſe they
" be quiet. So He bringeth them unto their
" deſired haven."

A more majeſtic deſcription of almighty power, cannot be found. Yet this very ſcripture, without altering a ſyllable, relates a fact, which paſſed between JESUS, and his diſciples. A violent ſtorm ariſes, the waves of the ſea are lifted up: His diſciples are ready to periſh, for the ſhip was beginning to ſink. They call not upon the Father, but upon CHRIST; not to pray for their deliverance, but to ſave them Himſelf. He hears their cry. He rebuked the wind, He ſaid unto

the ſea, " Peace, be ſtill;—and the wind " ceaſed, and there was a great calm." Now if uncontrolable dominion over the winds and waves, be in the Old Teſtament a demonſtration, that the GOD of the Jews was the Almighty; the ſame uncontrolable dominion, exerciſed by CHRIST in the moſt godlike manner, when invoked as alone able to ſave, muſt prove with equal force, that *He* is the Almighty alſo, *one* with the Father.

Again; We find that ſpreading out the heavens alone, and treading upon the waves of the ſea, are joined together as equal acts of almighty power, peculiar to GOD.—Now turn to *Mark* vi. 49. There you read, that when the diſciples were " toiling in rowing (for " the wind was contrary to them) about the " fourth watch of the night, JESUS cometh " unto them, walking on the ſea, and would " have paſſed by them. But when they ſaw " Him walking upon the ſea, they ſuppoſed " it had been a ſpirit, and cried out (for they " all ſaw Him,) and were troubled.—And im- " mediately He talked with them," by which they muſt know *who* it was.—After this He ſaith unto them, " Be of good cheer, Εγω ειμι, " *I am He*, be not afraid." Here in the very exerciſe

exercise of an act, declared in scripture to appertain to GOD alone, He calls Himself JEHOVAH;—for *I am He*, means no less, as shall presently be proved.

Should it be said, no works wrought by CHRIST, can ever oblige us to conclude He was the true GOD, because He says, "I can "do nothing of myself;" and prays to the Father, when He raised up *Lazarus* from the grave.

I answer; it would have been impossible, without these declarations, for us to have believed there is any distinction of persons in the divine nature, as we are taught to do; or the subjection of CHRIST in his offices of Servant and Mediator, to which he humbled himself, as the prophets foretold. Being, therefore, very GOD, and very Man, in one CHRIST, He could not, consistently with his own character, but speak at different times in a style proper to both. The church of CHRIST, therefore, can perfectly reconcile this apparent contradiction, and all passages in holy writ, which express his inferiority to the Father, and entire dependence upon Him: for this belongs to his character

as

as very Man and Mediator. — But upon ſuppoſition, that CHRIST is leſs than very GOD, no vindication can be admitted for his ever uſing the ſtyle of GOD, when He ſpeaks of Himſelf. Wiſdom, goodneſs, modeſty, and truth, all require, that creatures ſhould, with a ſacred dread, abſtain from every thing tending to confound themſelves with their Creator. But JESUS does the very reverſe. Hear Him vindicate Himſelf, when accuſed of polluting the Sabbath: "Hitherto the Father "worketh, and I work." See the ſign He gives, upon the Jews requiring one of Him, as his authority for driving the buyers and ſellers out of the temple. "Deſtroy this tem-"ple, (pointing to his own body) and in "three days, *I* will raiſe it up." Hear Him foretelling the victory of his croſs: "And I, "if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto "me," *John* xii. 32.

But above all obſerve, CHRIST frequently calls Himſelf JEHOVAH, or, *I am He.* That this expreſſion ſignifies JEHOVAH, cannot be doubted: — for it means *ſelf-exiſtence*; and is very often uſed, to denote the ſupreme majeſty of heaven and earth. Thus *Deut.* xxxii. 39. "See now that I, even *I am He*, and there

"is

" is no God with me."—*Pſalm* cii. 27. " Thou " art the ſame," in *Hebrew*, *Thou art He.* — And this title is here given, immediately after the creation of heaven and earth has been aſcribed to GOD. In *Iſa.* xli. 4. " I the " LORD, with the firſt, and with the laſt, " *I am He.*" Many other paſſages might be cited. But theſe ſufficiently prove, that the Jews were taught from holy writ to underſtand, that this grand appellation, *I am He*, expreſſing neceſſary exiſtence, belonged only to the Creator of all things. But this very appellation, CHRIST Himſelf aſſumes, as his own proper name. Diſcovering to the apoſtles, the almoſt incredible treachery of *Judas*, in betraying Him, " Theſe things I tell you," ſays He, " before it come to paſs, that when it " is come to paſs, ye may believe:" that is, from this inſtance of my omniſcience, " that *I* " *am He.*" When the Jews were enraged at his aſſerting his own exiſtence before *Abraham*, He enflames their riſing indignation againſt Himſelf to the utmoſt height, by affirming, with a kind of oath, his ſupreme Divinity.—" Verily, " verily, I ſay unto you, before *Abraham* was, I " am," or, *I am He.* A truth of ſuch abſolute neceſſity to be received, that He tells his adverſaries,

ſaries, *ver.* 24. " If ye believe not that *I am* " *He*, ye ſhall die in your ſins."

How then could the Jews do leſs than they did, regarding JESUS only as a man? They heard Him repeatedly affirm, " I am the LORD " GOD. I ſolemnly aſſure you, *I am He.* I " again tell you, that if you do not believe " that *I am He*, ye ſhall die in your ſins." GOD had given them a law againſt blaſphemers and falſe prophets, commanding that they ſhould be put to death by ſtoning. Suppoſing, therefore, JESUS was a mere man, *it was their bounden duty to ſtone Him to death for theſe ſayings*, as we know they often attempted to do. And it is the bounden duty of thoſe, who arrogate to themſelves the title of rational Chriſtians, chiefly for agreeing with Jews in denying the proper Divinity of CHRIST, and, with Jews, brand his church as idolaters for worſhipping Him; it is their bounden duty, I ſay, if they believe GOD abhors idolatry, with them, to call JESUS accurſed; when they read in his authentic hiſtory, that He takes to Himſelf the incommunicable name of JEHOVAH,—*I am He.*

This ſuppoſed blaſphemy, was the cauſe of his death. For " when the high prieſt aſked " Him,

" Him, and ſaid unto Him, Art Thou the " CHRIST, the Son of the Bleſſed? JESUS " ſaid, I am; or, I am He: — and ye ſhall " ſee the Son of Man ſitting on the right " hand of power, and coming in the clouds " of heaven. Then the high prieſt rent his " clothes, and ſaith, Ye have heard the blaſ- " phemy, what think ye? And they all con- " demned Him to be guilty of death," *Mark* xiv. 63.

And now ſee how they gather round his croſs, caſting barbarous inſults on Him in his agonies, and triumphing over Him in his fall. Behold his face, more marred than any man's, and his body ploughed up with long furrows, by the ſcourging He endured! Hear that loud and bitter cry, as of one ſinking under inexpreſſible horrors of mind, " My GOD, my " GOD, why haſt Thou forſaken me!"—Still the union of the divine and human nature never appeared more inconteſtable, than in the midſt of all this ſhocking ſcene: — for a ruffian, upon *his own confeſſion* deſerving the death he ſuffered, calls upon JESUS to remember him. He inſtantly receives from Him, an aſſurance of immediate everlaſting happineſs. Who can deliver after this manner, but

GOD

God alone? Take off the veil, which hides from the eye of ſenſe and unenlightened reaſon the tranſaction which paſſed on the croſs, and you will perceive, that Jesus appeared in no inſtance of his life ſo glorious, as when He hung a ſpectacle to men and angels on the accurſed tree. Then "his death deſtroyed death, "and him that had the power of it. As *Moſes* "lifted up the ſerpent in the wilderneſs, ſo "was the Son of Man lifted up," bound only by the cords of love, for the healing of the nations. His precious blood, which bathed his body, flowed "a fountain for all ſin, and "for all uncleanneſs;" of which the growing virtue, and the growing praiſe, ſhall fill with wonder and joy all heaven for ever.

Can ſuch beneficent effects be aſcribed to the blood of a mere man? or can the death of one innocent creature be the atonement for the ſins of innumerable myriads, and the everlaſting ſalvation of all who eſcape the wrath to come? Here the things conſtantly aſſerted in holy writ of the efficacy of Christ's death, are beyond all proportion, without ſuppoſing the blood of Christ, which purchaſed the church, was indeed the blood of God.

Nor

Nor during his unexampled humiliation, were proofs of his eternal Godhead wanting. Above, below, on every ſide, whilſt He hangs on the croſs, the whole frame of nature was violently diſturbed. Darkneſs at noon-day covers all the earth, for three hours. The ſun itſelf is darkened, not by an interpoſing planet, but by a miracle. The earth quakes, and with the veil of the temple, the rocks are rent. What manner of proportion is there between ſuch awful and grand prodigies as theſe, and the death of a mere innocent man? Did ever martyred prophet or apoſtle, receive any degree of ſuch honor, in their dying hours? What aileth thee, O thou earth, that thou wert moved, and thou ſun, that thou refuſedſt to ſhine? We can anſwer, Tremble not at the preſence only, but at the crucifixion of your Maker. In this loud and terrifying manner, publiſh the deteſtation due to the atrocious deed:—and when the God of nature ſuffers, let the whole inanimate creation expreſs its ſympathy with Him.

Having been crucified by the Scribes and Phariſees, for aſſerting his equality with the Father; after his reſurrection, inſtead of refuſing, as ſacrilege, He openly receives the adoration

adoration due to GOD only. *Thomas*, upon hearing JESUS declare to Him all his thoughts, and ſtubborn unbelief of heart, concerning his reſurrection, *ſaid unto Him, My Lord, and my God!* — At his aſcenſion, all his diſciples worſhip Him. Soon after *Stephen* is ſtoned, invoking, and ſaying, "LORD JESUS, receive "my ſpirit. — And he kneeled down and "cried with a loud voice, LORD, lay not this "ſin to their charge." Here a martyr "beholding the heavens opened, and JESUS at "the right hand of GOD," prays to Him alone for the two greateſt gifts which can be received, the ſalvation of his own ſoul, and the pardon of the worſt murderers under heaven. Yet this very martyr, if CHRIST be not by nature GOD, with the Father, dies in the very act of idolatry; therefore, according to expreſs ſcripture, "can never enter into "the kingdom of heaven." This is but one amongſt a thouſand glaring abſurdities, which inevitably follow from degrading the Savior into a mere man, or a creature.

From this time, and no wonder, we find the churches of CHRIST conſtantly diſtinguiſhed by the very practice of the firſt martyr, by their *calling* on the name of the LORD JESUS.

JESUS. And calling upon GOD, we know, is the Old Teſtament phraſe for worſhipping Him. When more than ſixty years had paſſed from his aſcenſion, St *John* is favored with a viſit from his beſt and deareſt friend. So glorious was the ſight, that he fell at his feet as dead. "And He laid his right hand upon "me, ſaying unto me," (obſerve He takes to Himſelf the ſtyle of the Supreme) "I am the "firſt, and the laſt, *I am He that liveth*, and "was dead; and behold, I am alive for ever-"more, Amen; and have the keys of hell "and of death," *Rev.* i. 17. And to finiſh the whole account, the throne of GOD and the Lamb are joined together, as receiving the everlaſting adoration of all the company of heaven.—Thus the Oracles of GOD deliver down the character of CHRIST to all ages.

But how contrary to every idea of wiſdom, goodneſs, and propriety, is this hiſtory of CHRIST, if He be no more than a man, or a creature! Why then at his birth is He called the LORD? Why does He do the works of GOD in the manner of GOD? Why ſpeak the language which appertains to GOD only? Why in his death receive atteſtation to his innocence from the whole inanimate creation?

Why after his reſurrection receive worſhip as GOD from *Thomas*, from all his diſciples, from all the churches, from ſaints and angels in heaven?

So interwoven is this grand article of the Chriſtian creed in the whole ſcheme of ſcriptural religion, that you demoliſh it all, as ſoon as you degrade CHRIST into a mere man, or a creature. For immediately our natural condition and character, ſinful and corrupt in that degree the ſcriptures deſcribe it, muſt be denied; our obligations to love, obey, and truſt GOD, muſt be diminiſhed exceedingly; our eſtimate of the nature and demerit of ſin, of the divine diſpleaſure againſt it; of the perfections of GOD, and the way in which eternal life is to be attained, muſt be totally different from what the church of CHRIST hath ever believed. Immediately we muſt ſee great reaſon to be offended at many things which CHRIST ſpoke, and many ſtrong paſſages in ſcripture, which nothing but the utmoſt violence of interpretation can pervert from teſtifying to his ſupreme Divinity. And if we are true to our principles, and men of thought, we ſhall very ſoon be involved in the utmoſt perplexity, to account for this greateſt of all myſteries, — how

how the Chriſtian church, with the apoſtles at the head of it, were all ſuffered to fall into idolatry;—to continue in the abominable worſhip of a mere man or creature, with the worſhip due to the ſupreme GOD.—This is a ſtrong objection againſt the Revealer Himſelf:—and will lead to a contempt of Chriſtianity. For what great good has it done?—Jews and Turks, not Chriſtians, are the true worſhippers, according to their ſcheme, who deny the Son. And the crime of the Jews in calling CHRIST, if but a mere man, though a true prophet, *accurſed*; or of the Turks, in ſetting aſide his Goſpel, becauſe they think it exceedingly corrupted, is as nothing, compared to the *univerſal idolatry* of the *Chriſtian* Church in adoring CHRIST, as "GOD, over all, "bleſſed for ever." For thoſe who thus worſhip Him, muſt be, in their eyes who deny Him to be very GOD, *Idolaters*. And they in ours, enemies to the croſs of CHRIST, blaſphemers of his adorable name, and ſubverters of his holy religion.

So far, therefore, is it from being, as many moſt falſly aſſert, a point of ſpeculation in divinity, what we believe concerning the character and nature of CHRIST, that not one arti-

cle in the whole compaſs of religion is of equal importance. And if there be any one point of faith more characteriſtic of the Chriſtian church than another, it is THIS, that "JESUS CHRIST is the true GOD, and eternal "life."

CHAP. XXVIII.

On contempt of Preaching.

THE great utility of the Baptiſt's miniſtry, predicted in this Prophecy, proves their miſtake, who undervalue the preaching of the Goſpel. For allowing both the miſſion and endowments of the Baptiſt and the Apoſtles were in ſeveral reſpects extraordinary, ſtill *all* miniſters whom CHRIST ſends, are, as they were, appointed to "give light to "them that ſit in darkneſs, and to turn the "hearts of the diſobedient to the wiſdom of "the juſt." They are alſo furniſhed with qualifications for this office, and have aſſurance of *ſucceſs*, in ſome meaſure, as the Baptiſt and Apoſtles had in a ſuperabundant degree.

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The proof of these assertions should animate every faithful pastor with confident expectation of saving the souls of men; and convince those who disparage this mode of spreading divine knowledge, that they greatly err, and offend GOD.

All preachers, sent by CHRIST, it was said, are appointed to the same kind of work, as the Baptist and Apostles were. Read the institution of the ministerial office. You must confess it to be one and the same in every age: for "when the LORD ascended up on "high, after leading our captivity captive," He, to perpetuate the benefits of his glorious triumph, "gave some apostles, some pro-"phets, some evangelists, some pastors and "teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, "for the work of the ministry, for the edify-"ing the body of CHRIST; till we all come in "the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge "of the Son of GOD, unto a perfect ma; "unto the measure of the stature of the ful-"ness of CHRIST," *Ephes.* iv.

To secure these grand purposes, the Christian ministry was at first instituted; and, as the terms necessarily import, must be exercised, so

long as CHRIST has a church upon earth. But in this inſtitution, the extraordinary and ordinary officers of the church, are appointed to the very ſame ſpiritual employment. Neither the ſplendid gifts peculiar to the apoſtles, prophets, and evangeliſts; nor their unequaled extent of uſefulneſs, prevent a perfect equality in this reſpect. They are *all* ſet apart to preach CHRIST, and call ſinners to repentance; that "they may receive remiſſion of "their ſins, and an inheritance amongſt them "that are ſanctified, through faith which is "in Him:" for this is the work of the miniſtry. They are *all* ſet apart "for the per-"fecting of the ſaints," by cementing them together in the unity of the faith,—"and for "the edifying the body of CHRIST;" that is, promoting their obedience, and increaſing their comfort by more full diſcoveries of the counſel of GOD, till they enter into glory.

But on the ſuppoſition, that paſtors and teachers whom CHRIST ſends, can ever ceaſe to be uſeful in this moſt beneficent manner, then his gift to his church muſt become of of no value. Then either the converſion of ſinners, and advancement of the faithful in ſpiritual life, muſt entirely ceaſe, or be produced

duced and maintained by other means than the Savior ordained for this purpoſe; which would at once impeach his veracity, and caſt contempt on his own appointment: a caſe which cannot be ſuppoſed. Conſequently the being, and well-being of the church, in all ages, muſt depend upon the inſtrumentality of thoſe officers, whom the LORD entruſts with the treaſure of his Goſpel, and makes rulers over his houſhold, "to give them meat "in due ſeaſon."

The origin, therefore, of the Chriſtian preacher's office is divine, and its deſign moſt beneficent to men. Proper qualifications alſo, are always found in thoſe whom CHRIST puts into this office. The inſpired epiſtles to *Timothy* and *Titus*, ſpecify that knowledge and love of the truth; that facility to explain and prove it to others; that exemplary behavior, and ſanctity of character, which are indiſpenſably required in this holy profeſſion. Theſe qualifications are divine credentials, which *viſibly* diſtinguiſh the men whom the LORD has been pleaſed to call, chooſe, and appoint to this office. Without theſe qualifications, preachers thruſt themſelves by human ordination into the miniſtry to get bread, or from

vile ambition to gain preferment and power in the church.

From the poſſeſſion of theſe qualifications, common to all teachers whom CHRIST ſends, they muſt harmonize with the apoſtles in the unity of the faith. There can be no diſagreement amongſt them in eſſentials; becauſe they are *all* taught of GOD, out of the ſame ſcripture, to lay the ſame foundation, to build the ſame ſuperſtructure, to give the ſame account of the fall, the redemption, the world, and the church.

Thus qualified, teachers whom CHRIST ſends muſt have ſeals to their miniſtry, and turn ſome to righteouſneſs: becauſe the LORD, in honor of his truth, for encouragement of his ſervants, and in love to his people, has decreed this ſhall be the certain conſequence of preaching his word. In one paſſage, He compares its operation to the influence of ſnow and rain, "which come down from hea-"ven, and return not thither, but give ſeed "to the ſower, and bread to the eater;"—declaring, "his word ſhall not return unto Him "void, but ſhall accompiſh that which He "pleaſe, and proſper in the thing whereto "He ſent it." But He ſends it for the juſtification,

fication, converſion, and everlaſting ſalvation of men: which He expreſſes under the following beautiful imagery. "For ye" (by whom this word is received) "ſhall go out" (of your natural ſtate of guilt, condemnation, and ſlavery to ſin) "with joy, and be led forth" (in the good ways of the LORD) "with peace. "—Inſtead of the thorn," (fit emblem of ſinners, altogether unprofitable) "ſhall come up "the uſeful, ſtately fir-tree," well repreſenting the excellent of the earth.—"Inſtead of "the brier," (deſpicable men, vexing all about them, whoſe end is to be burnt) "ſhall "come up the" beautiful, ſweet-ſcented "myrtle-tree," (emblem of peaceful, amiable believers. "And it" (this divine transformation) "ſhall be to the LORD for a name, "and for an everlaſting ſign" (of the efficacy of his word preached) "which ſhall not be "cut off," *Iſai.* lv.

In another paſſage, applicable to the times of the Goſpel, (for *Jeremiah* ſays, "what is "there ſpoken, ſhall be conſidered in the lat-"ter days,") the Almighty accuſes falſe teachers of running before they are ſent; of propheſying, before He had ſpoken to them; of telling dreams and lies, and cauſing the people

ple to err. After this heavy charge, He points out the method they *ſhould* have taken to ſucceed:—"But if they had ſtood in my "counſel, and had cauſed my people to hear "my words, then they ſhould have turned "them from their evil ways, and from their "evil doings. Let him that hath my word, "ſpeak my word faithfully. What is the "chaff to the wheat? Is not my word like "as a fire, ſaith the LORD, and like a ham-"mer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" *Jer.* xxiii.

How can we avoid concluding from theſe declarations, that ſome degree of *ſucceſs* muſt accompany the faithful preaching of GOD's word? Did not St *Paul* conclude thus, when He charged *Timothy* to take heed to himſelf, and to his doctrine; aſſuring him, that by ſo doing, he ſhould ſave himſelf, and thoſe that heard him? Did he not conclude thus, when he determined to *rejoice* that CHRIST was preached, though it was from the baſeſt motives, from envy, ſtrife, and malevolence againſt himſelf? No other reaſon can be given for this determination, than the certainty there is of ſucceſs in ſome degree, from preaching that name, "which is above every name."

Should

Should it be ſaid, that CHRIST Himſelf "ſtretched forth his hands all the day long "to a diſobedient and gainſaying people;"— that the apoſtles cried out, "Who hath believ- "ed our report? and to whom hath the arm of "the LORD been revealed?" I grant they did. Yet how many *thouſands* were ſaved by their labors? How many churches were planted? The caſe is ſtill the ſame. Much good upon the whole is done by paſtors and teachers whom CHRIST ſends, notwithſtanding the vaſt majority excuſe themſelves from receiving their doctrine, and either hate or deſpiſe it. Still, in the language of the parable which deſcribes this matter, "the poor and the maim- ed, the halt and the blind, the outcaſts in the highways and hedges;" that is, many of the helpleſs, the afflicted, and the moſt guilty, will be brought in to feaſt at the ſupper. Faith- ful, ſcriptural repreſentations of our natural ſtate; of the qualities and deſert of ſin; of the perſon, ſufferings, love, and triumph of CHRIST in the redemption of his church; of the grace, mercy and peace enjoyed through believing in his name, never fail of produc- ing, in ſome meaſure, an effect worthy of GOD, and becoming the publication of his own

word,

word; which He calls "the good ſeed, bring-
"ing forth good fruit; in ſome an hundred-
"fold, in ſome ſixty, in ſome thirty; the truth
"that ſanctifies, and makes the ſoul free in-
"deed."

Every faithful preacher, therefore, of this word, ſhould be importunate with his LORD, to grant him to ſee it made the inſtrument more and more of turning men from the error of their way:—ſhould boldly plead the divine inſtitution of his office, its beneficent deſign, his call to it, and the promiſe of ſucceſs, till the moſt Mighty "girds his ſword upon his thigh, and rides on conquering in favor of the word of truth, meekneſs, and righteouſneſs. "What are inſatiable love of ſin, ſottiſh ignorance, pride, and unbelief, with all their viſible and inviſible abettors, before this rod of his power? The word of the truth of the Goſpel, we read of old, brought forth fruit in all the world. Has it loſt its divine efficacy in a courſe of years? No more than the ſun its light or heat: "For his name ſhall endure "for ever; his name ſhall be continued as long "as the ſun; and men ſhall be bleſſed in Him," who is the great ſubject of the Goſpel.

How groundleſs then is the common plea uſed to diſparage the utility of preaching CHRIST:

CHRIST : — " We know already as much as we can be told. Church prayers and reading the ſcriptures, are ſufficient. It ſignifies very little what is preached. We do our duty, when we worſhip GOD. The vulgar only need to be taught."

Moſt abſurd and falſe ! For the prayers of the Church are ſeldom uſed aright, or the ſcripture underſtood, till faithful preaching has enlightened the mind. And the reaſon is plain : We are naturally averſe to come any further under the power of religion, than is conſiſtent with great indulgence to pride and ſelf-will. Hence we exalt cuſtomary forms of devotion in ſecret, regular attendance upon public worſhip, external and partial obedience, as ſufficient, and grow ſecure in the practice of theſe things. A zealous attack, therefore, upon this favorite error, from the miniſters of CHRIST, is the way GOD generally is pleaſed to uſe for its detection and overthrow. Thus in the Jewiſh church, they had the Oracles, the Covenants, and the Service of GOD. Of theſe they made their boaſt, and from day to day attended upon the worſhip of GOD. But it was in hypocriſy, ignorance, and great wickedneſs, that they worſhipped Him, not " in

" ſpirit

" ſpirit and in truth." With all the advantages for the knowledge of GOD in their hands, and in the conſtant uſe of the means of grace, they were ſtill " ſitting in darkneſs, " and the ſhadow of death." And thoſe who received the light of life, did not receive it principally from reading the Scriptures, to which they had been accuſtomed from their childhood, nor to the temple-ſervice, which they had always attended; but to the Baptiſt's miniſtry. His alarming denunciations of the wrath to come, againſt all who truſted in themſelves as righteous; his full and glorious teſtimony to the Lamb of GOD; diſpelled the miſts and darkneſs, which till then had covered their minds: though he ſpoke only what *Moſes*, the *Pſalms*, and the Prophets contained.

The very ſame inſtrument, namely, faithful preaching of his word, GOD is pleaſed, as appears from hiſtory, and matter of fact paſſing before our eyes, to make uſe of in every age, when " He gives knowledge of ſalvation to " his people." Faithful preaching manifeſts the difference between nominal and real Chriſtians; — between barren aſſent to ſcripture-doctrines, and the faith of GOD's Elect; — between external obedience, and ſpiritual life; — between

between honoring CHRIST with all his titles, from mere influence of education, and cleaving to Him from real want and knowledge of his excellency.

Deſpiſe not then propheſying. It is eminently the channel by which GOD has choſen to convey his Grace to the children of men. Do not fancy liberal education, learning, honeſty, or the practice of devotion, ſet you above reaping much advantage for your ſoul, from paſtors, whom CHRIST has really called, qualified, and ſent into his vineyard. Conſider that from the beginning, it was his manner to ſend his diſciples before Him, whitherſoever he Himſelf would come; and his command to all, who long for the ſalvation of men, is, "to pray the LORD of the harveſt, to ſend "forth laborers into the harveſt." Remember the *Ethiopian* eunuch, with all his piety, underſtood not the ſcripture he was ſo devoutly reading, nor the way of life, till *Philip* was ſent to preach CHRIST unto him: nor *Cornelius*, till *Peter* told him "words, whereby he "might be ſaved." How could the excellent advantages which faithful preaching produces be rendered more conſpicuous, or greater honor be put upon the office?

CHAP.

CHAP. XXIX.

On the Connexion between Chriſtian Doctrine and Good Works.

THE Prophecy of *Zacharias*, by being full of the peculiar principles of Chriſtianity, proves it is a great miſtake to preſs the practice of good Works *in neglect* of Chriſtian doctrine. Yet how many zealouſly contend, that men ſhould *only* be taught to be ſober, peaceable, and kind in their families; to "do "juſtice, love mercy," and attend upon the worſhip of GOD, believing the Chriſtian religion is from heaven. But the ſcripture-doctrine of innate depravity infecting every man, and of the Law concluding all under ſin, which are the ground-work of Redemption; the glory of the Redeemer's perſon, work, and ſalvation; Juſtification by faith in his name; the new Covenant and Oath of GOD; the witneſs and influence of the holy Ghoſt; and "the knowledge of ſalvation by the re-"miſſion of ſins."—Theſe things, they ſuppoſe, are far above common comprehenſion;

for

for which reaſon they ought not to be the topics of inſtruction from the pulpit. The beſt ſervice you can do to men, is to dwell only on *plain and practical ſubjects*.

This miſtake has been long aſſerted with the greateſt confidence, and much too eaſily credited. It is neceſſary, therefore, to expoſe its falſhood, and many bad effects.

If Chriſtian doctrines then are to be paſſed over in ſilence, as above the level of common underſtandings, the moſt important part of the Bible muſt be of very little uſe. The moſt important part, is that, doubtleſs, which hath ſomething in the manner of its delivery peculiarly ſolemn; and all who hear, are called upon to regard with particular attention; which CHRIST and his apoſtles repeat from the prophets, containing what can be known *only* by expreſs revelation from GOD. Honored with this high diſtinction are the Chriſtian doctrines. For inſtance, that "the "ſeed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's "head;" that the child born to us, is the "mighty GOD; the deliverer of his peo- "ple; the propitiation for ſin; the alone "mediator between GOD and man; a great

" and merciful high prieſt, the univerſal " judge," in and through whom, all who unfeignedly truſt in Him ſhall be ſaved, and all who deſpiſe Him ſhall periſh. Theſe great things, have the higheſt mark of diſtinction put upon them, to make them project to our notice above the reſt of ſcripture; for they are proclaimed with the utmoſt ſolemnity, and awfully introduced, or concluded, with " Thus ſaith the LORD of " Hoſts: The zeal of the LORD of Hoſts will " perform this." They are repeated from the prophets, by CHRIST and his apoſtles, and the greateſt ſtreſs is laid upon receiving them. But if no formal proof, explanation, or recommendation of theſe great truths are to be offered; if the practice of univerſal righteouſneſs *only* muſt be urged, all-important as they are, they will very ſoon be deſpiſed, or at leaſt forgotten. For to what uſe will any man ſuppoſe they can ſerve, if their certainty, importance, or practical influence are never preſſed upon the conſcience by them, whoſe office it is to do it? Theſe doctrines have no place naturally in our minds, nor are they deducible from our own reaſonings, ſince they ſpring only from the

counſel

counſel of GOD. By the conſtant omiſſion of them, therefore, on the one hand, and conſtant urging the practice of good works *only* on the other, who can avoid concluding, that good works may be well produced, independent of Chriſtian doctrine, and are ſufficient to ſalvation; — that the moral part of Chriſtianity is only worthy of eſteem, and all in the New Teſtament, as well as the Old, reſpecting CHRIST Himſelf, (his example excepted) may be paſſed over in ſilence, without offence to GOD, or detriment to man? Thus the moſt important part of holy writ is made to appear inſignificant.

This guilty neglect of Chriſtian doctrine, ſo diſhonorable to the Bible, directly contradicts the judgment of CHRIST and his apoſtles. Had all the Savior's ſermons been like that on the mount, it might have been pretended with ſome plauſibility, that the whole deſign of the Goſpel Revelation was to make men *good*, without regard to faith in any particular doctrines. But how very different from any thing contained in that divine diſcourſe, are many of his dictates? Does He not plainly teach the univerſal ruin of mankind in the fall, when He ſays, "The Son

" of man is come to seek and to save that " which was lost, and to give his life a ran- " som for many?" Does he not mark our innate depravity, in the strongest lines, by specifying the manifold iniquities which proceed out of the heart, as streams from their fountain-head, and defile the man? Does He not twice, with a kind of oath, assert the absolute necessity of our being born again of the Spirit, because in our first and natural state we are all born after the flesh? Does He not with the most solemn asseveration declare, there is no life or salvation, without eating his flesh, or drinking his blood? comparing Himself no less than *six times* in one chapter to the manna, which was the whole sustenance of *Israel* in the wilderness," *John* vi.

Besides, how very little in the Gospel of St *John* is delivered on plain practical subjects, compared with what is there taught concerning CHRIST, his work, and salvation. Great part of that brief history, is taken up in displaying his glory, as " the Lamb of GOD, " that taketh away the sin of the world;—the " bread of GOD, that came down from hea- " ven;—the light of the world;—the way, " the truth, and the life;—the word that

" was

" was in the beginning with GOD, and was " GOD ;—the good ſhepherd, that giveth his " life for the ſheep," and preſerves them from periſhing, in ſpite of all their foes.

Now as no glimpſe of theſe ſublime truths is ſeen in thoſe parts of ſcripture, which are only deſigned to inculcate *moral practice*, when we meet with aſſertions of them, they muſt be intended to teach us ſomething *very different from it*, even the peculiar doctrines of the Chriſtian faith.

If the Savior then before his crucifixion, when it was improper, for ſeveral reaſons, to ſpeak too explicitly about the nature and efficacy of his own death, reſurrection, and aſcenſion, did yet by no means omit teaching, much more than moral righteouſneſs, no one can neglect theſe his ſayings, without reproaching Him as a ſolemn trifler, for revealing things unneceſſary to be known, and condemning that method of religious inſtruction, which He, in infinite wiſdom, adopted.

When the kingdom of CHRIST was ſet up after his aſcenſion, the apoſtles inſiſt alſo *much more* on the doctrines of faith, than on the practice of good works. They perpetually

teach, that "JESUS was exalted to be a "Prince, and a Savior, to give repentance "and remiſſion of ſins;—that there is ſalva- "tion in no other;—that through this man "is preached the forgiveneſs of ſins, and by "Him all that believe are juſtified from all "things, from which they could not be juſ- "tified by the law of *Moſes*." What are the *Acts of the holy Apoſtles*, more than an account of their travels from one city and country to another, to preach the kingdom of GOD, and the things which concern the Lord JESUS CHRIST, with the effects their teſtimony produced; ſubjects certainly very different from juſtice, mercy, or the love of GOD, though the appointed means of leading men into the practice of thoſe graces. The *inſpired Epiſtles* addreſſed to men who already believed the articles of the Chriſtian faith, are almoſt every one of them written on the ſame plan. They open with a grand, affecting account of the eſſential doctrines and bleſſings of the Goſpel; from whence, towards the concluſion, devotedneſs of heart to GOD, purity of manners, and the moſt exemplary obedience are preſſed, not only as becoming their Chriſtian profeſſion, but as fruits neceſſary to prove a real union with CHRIST. The long epiſtle

to

to the *Romans*, and that to the *Hebrews*, is a syſtem of divinity relating to CHRIST and his church, with an application of the whole to practice. Every one by opening his Bible may ſee theſe things for himſelf.

I obſerve further, that theſe doctrines are not only often taught by CHRIST, but at full length explained and eſtabliſhed by his apoſtles, and their excellent influence is expreſsly affirmed. Were they above common comprehenſion, or of a *ſpeculative* nature, could the glory of delivering men from condemnation, and from ſlavery to ſin, be aſcribed to them? Yet to them this glory is aſcribed, when our LORD affirms, "The truth ſhall make you "free;" and when He prays for his diſciples, "Father, ſanctify them by thy truth; thy "word is truth." Would He Himſelf ſay, "to the *poor* the Goſpel is *preached*;" or St *James*, that "GOD hath choſen the *poor*, *rich in faith*;" or St *Paul*, that "the things "which are deſpiſed, and are not," (meaning the ſlaves who were bought and ſold like cattle) "hath GOD choſen, that CHRIST "might be made of Him wiſdom, righteouſ-"neſs, ſanctification, and redemption" to them? Would theſe things be aſſerted, if

the peculiar doctrines of the Gospel were above common comprehension? They must then work like a charm, and the lowest of the people become rich towards God, and wise, and holy, and be received into glory, without understanding the things preached to them, as the means of their salvation.

To positive assertions of the usefulness of these doctrines, an express command is added, to *teach them constantly*; which alone is sufficient to decide the point, and ought to be well considered by them, whose false, rash zeal for good works, hurries them into a criminal neglect of Christian principles. St *Paul* charges *Titus* to declare with all authority, that it is "the *Grace of* God which bringeth *salvation*, (not the law of works, which "faith, He that doeth these things, shall live "by them) hath appeared unto all men, "teaching them to deny ungodliness and "worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." He again charges *Titus*, to affirm *constantly* the total corruption of human nature; free justification through the kindness and love of God our Savior; regeneration, and renewing of the holy Ghost; *in order that* "they who have believed

"lieved in GOD, might be careful to main-
"tain good works," calling these doctrines,
"good and profitable unto men *."

But

* The mere sound of scripture words, has been much abused to oppose their real meaning. This has happened remarkably in the text before us. Many urge it, with the utmost confidence, as a command to dwell on the practice of good works, when, in fact, the text is a charge to all Christian ministers, to insist on man's wretched state before faith in CHRIST, and the rich mercy of GOD through Him, for justification, regeneration, and eternal life. The inspired Apostle first affirms the truth and certainty of these things, by calling the whole of this doctrine, *a faithful word*. He then asserts their excellent influence, as *the reason why* they must be taught *constantly*: "That they who have be-
"lieved in GOD, might be careful to maintain good
"works." Here the conjunction ἵνα, plainly proves, that good works are *produced* by the constant teaching of these doctrines, *not* that pressing good works, should be the constant subject of Christian teaching. To confirm this sense of the passage, the authority of great critics agrees with the context. *Erasmus* renders the verse, "Fidus sermo, et de *his* volo, ut confirmes, *quo*
"*folliciti sint*, ut bonis operibus prosint." *Junius & Tremellius*, "Fidus est sermo, et in his volo, ut ita quoque
"confirmes eos, *ut folliciti sint* ad faciendum bona opera." *Schoetgetius in Paſorem*, "ἵνα proprié notat causam finalem." And the *French* versions render this conjunction by *a fin que*. Indeed the context will agree with no other sense. For to give greater weight to the command,

these

But how falſe is all this, if they are above common comprehenſion? if a life acceptable to our Maker, can be ſupported without their aid; or if *only* preſſing upon men the neceſſity of moral practice, be the moſt effectual way to produce good works?

Added to the guilt of oppoſing the judgment of CHRIST, of his apoſtles, and an expreſs command to preach theſe doctrines, all who neglect them in zeal for preſſing moral practice, are chargeable with defeating one grand end of the Chriſtian miniſtry, which is, to expound

theſe things which *Titus* was charged to affirm conſtantly, are ſaid "to be good and profitable unto men." Now to underſtand *good works* by theſe things, not the *doctrines* beforenamed, will make the ſenſe extremely flat, and the aſſertion abſolutely needleſs: for whoever doubted whether *good* works were "*good* and profitable "unto men?" But that theſe doctrines are ſo, the world hath in all ages vehemently denied, and reproached them as moſt unfriendly to virtuous practice. A divine declaration, therefore, in their favour, was highly neceſſary. Beſides, the *oppoſition* between doctrines "good and profitable unto men," and vain and fooliſh queſtions, with the command to reject *heretics*, in the context, proves the inſpired Apoſtle is ſpeaking of thoſe doctrines only, which are highly inſtrumental in promoting Chriſtian practice, and not of Chriſtian practice itſelf.

pound the ſcripture. Our buſineſs is to *collect* the various teſtimonies ſcattered through the ſacred volume, in order to prove more fully the capital truths of the Chriſtian faith, and throw a light and beauty upon many otherwiſe obſcure parts, till the ſcripture itſelf becomes a book of great inſtruction, ſupport, conſolation and delight to the people. On the Chriſtian doctrines all the other parts of ſcripture have dependance; and a connection with them as an exemplification of their truth; ſo that they ſerve, when underſtood, as a key to explain the *whole* which relates to ſpiritual life and godlineſs. But no lectures which confine our attention to the practice of moral righteouſneſs *only*, can afford the leaſt help to underſtand thoſe ſcripture-paſſages, which want explanation. On the contrary, men will learn to contract from this method a *diſlike* to the Bible, for ſpeaking ſo emphatically a language quite oppoſite to the ſufficiency of good works, which they hear conſtantly extolled. When all ſhare in the grand buſineſs of juſtifying a ſinner before GOD is taken from works, and the whole glory aſcribed to CHRIST; —when ſupreme love of Him, even to loſing our life for his ſake, is exacted with all

all authority under penalty of being accurſed and deſtroyed for ever, if we do not thus love Him. And when ſo much ſtreſs is laid upon faith in Him as the radical grace, from which alone all goodneſs can grow; theſe ſcriptures muſt be heard with jealouſy and great offence, after we have long been told, the ſtreſs of our ſalvation is to be laid *on our own goodneſs*, independent of any affection to a crucified Redeemer. At beſt, all ſcriptures of this import, muſt appear ſtrange and unintelligible. And when good works are thus laid as the *ground of our hope* towards GOD, the nature and deſert of ſin cannot be ſeen or believed, as the ſcripture repreſents them both; becauſe in this caſe, the beſt works we can perform, are of no more weight againſt our guilt, than the genteel addreſs of an aſſaſſin, is to atone for his atrocious crimes. But ſlight thoughts of ſin muſt cauſe the ſcripture to appear greatly exceptionable; in denouncing the penalty of death as the wages of *every* tranſgreſſion;—in the judgment already executed upon offenders, which it records, and the tremendous doom reſerved for them in the eternal world. Theſe things will ever appear contrary to our ideas of goodneſs and juſtice, till we have greatly humbled

ourſelves

ourſelves before GOD, as creatures exceedingly guilty; which never will be effected by exalting the *worth* of our own duties.

After ſtrong prejudices, therefore, againſt ſeveral parts of ſcripture on theſe accounts, have brooded ſome time in our minds, the natural relief for perſons ſo diſguſted with the book, is to liſten to, and cheriſh objections againſt its divine authority, till they become covert, if not avowed infidels: for it is an eaſy and natural tranſition, from violent diſguſt againſt the book, to wiſh it was an impoſition, and then to treat it as one. So *injurious* to divine revelation, in the concluſion, is a raſh zeal for preſſing the practice of good works, in neglect of Chriſtian doctrine.

It is no leſs injurious to the very cauſe it means to ſerve: for the peculiar doctrines which CHRIST and his apoſtles taught, and all ſucceeding paſtors are charged to maintain, have this honor put upon them, becauſe the evidence of their truth is found in the neceſſities of our natural condition, and are moſt affecting to every individual, *as ſoon as he comes to the knowledge of himſelf*, whether he hath received the improvements of education, or cannot tell one letter from another.

another. A brief review of the principal doctrines of CHRIST, will prove this.

What object can you place before men, more likely to impreſs them, than an immortal ſpirit in a ſtate of ruin? "Fooliſh, diſ-"obedient, deceived, ſerving divers luſts and "pleaſures, living in malice and envy," and on account of ſuch depravity, become hateful even to the wiſe and good GOD. Yet the *whole* of this depravity, is manifeſt in the purpoſe, tempers, purſuits, and pleaſures of men in all ſtations, and of every age, till they are renewed in the ſpirit of their mind. Conſequently this black indictment, faithfully drawn up, and proved by two infallible witneſſes, ſcripture and matter of fact, will, as far as argument can, excite men earneſtly to ſeek deliverance from a condition ſo infamous and guilty;—it will work upon them, either to turn away in a rage, from the faithful glaſs, which ſhews them their own features; or to humble themſelves in a full confeſſion of all their miſery before GOD, with unfeigned deſire to walk in newneſs of life.

Again; What argument ſo likely to affect the giddy and the gay, the rich and high-minded;

minded; awakening even them to ſerious conſideration, as a *whole world* of condemned malefactors;—condemned for breaking a law of moſt benevolent intention, of conſummate excellence, enacted by higheſt authority: the penalty for which tranſgreſſion is, and ought to be extremely great, even the curſe of GOD. The nature and end of law, in every nation under heaven, and the known condition of all capital offenders convicted by it, join aid with ſcripture-doctrine, to help our dull conceptions of the conſequences of our ſin. In which caſe one, as well as another, can perceive, that due care ought to be taken to demonſtrate, it is not from ſlight thoughts of ſin, that GOD receives any of us to mercy; due care that his juſtice and purity ſhould be fully manifeſted in the puniſhment of ſin, leſt the favor of forgiveneſs ſhould be deemed a little matter, and wantonly abuſed. But from this obvious conſideration, ſalvation by CHRIST *alone* is calculated to ſtrike the mind as the wiſdom and power of GOD.

With reſpect alſo to the perſon of CHRIST, and his office, what circumſtance is there, that the people cannot comprehend? When

the

the prophet ſaith, " Behold your God ſhall " come with vengeance, even God with a " recompence, He ſhall come and ſave you; " all who are weak and fearful of heart, leſt " they ſhould be loſt," (whom theſe words addreſs) will clearly perceive the ſuitableneſs, the great value of the promiſe, and long for its accompliſhment. And when the Savior is called " Light of the world, Prince of " peace, Emmanuel," the ſound is joyful, the condeſcenſion amazing, and the benefit it encourages us to expect, moſt welcome to every one who deſires peace and communion with God.

Above all, the grand central truth of the Bible, *the eternal redemption of the Church*, is formed from our very conſtitution to ſtrike us, as ſoon as it is propoſed and believed, above every other argument. Even an enormous offender *dying* under the hands of juſtice, is a powerful preacher againſt his own crimes, to a thouſand ſpectators. His end will draw attention from young and old, rich and poor, who would ſleep over every exhortation to obey the laws, without ſuch an example of juſtice before their eyes. The *death* of an innocent man, of a martyr, is ſtill more

more intereſting. But a father, affected as *David* was for his rebellious *Abſalom*; and not only *willing* to give up his own life a ſubſtitute for his abandoned offſpring, but actually expiring a ſacrifice for them, excites the tendereſt emotions the heart can feel. —We ſhould even be reproached as wanting in humanity itſelf, did we not paſſionately admire ſuch a character. From theſe inſtances, judge what muſt be the impreſſion, when the Maker of all things ſaith, "Lo, I "come; (a body haſt thou prepared me,) to "die for the ungodly, for ſinners, for ene-"mies." When this fact is believed and realized to the mind; love, and adoration, and zeal to pleaſe ſuch an unparalleled benefactor, ſprings up;—a Lawgiver higher than the heavens, purging away ſin by the ſacrifice of Himſelf, that his people might be ſaved, and the law receive no diſhonor *.

The

* A very remarkable fact in the life of *Lycurgus*, Prince of *Sparta*, proves what ſtrong impreſſions, ſufferings endured for our benefit naturally make upon us. When *Lycurgus* attempted to bring about an equal diviſion of the *Spartan* lands, the very firſt propoſal met with ſo violent an oppoſition from the men of property,

 that

The rich bleſſings alſo which are purchaſed by this bleeding oblation on the croſs, with the godlike manner of their conveyance, are formed to win the heart. Forgiveneſs of ſins, peace with GOD, free acceſs to Him, as his adopted children; a new creation of mind after his image; the pleaſures of a holy life; hope abounding in the midſt of trials; victory over death; a reſurrection of the body to glory; the ſight of GOD as He is, and the eternal enjoyment of Him in heaven. All theſe bleſſings, offered without money, and without price, to every one that thirſteth for ſalvation,

that a fray enſued, in which *Lycurgus* loſt *one* of his eyes. *The people, ſtruck with the ſight of the blood of their admired lawgiver*, ſeized the offender, one *Alcander* by name, and gave him up to be puniſhed at diſcretion. *Lycurgus*, with the greateſt generoſity, freely forgave him: for which *Alcander* inſtantly admired and loved him; became his warmeſt friend, and greateſt advocate with the men of property, who oppoſed his deſigns.

If the loſs of one member of the body only, in a noble contention for the welfare of the republic, wrought thus powerfully on the people, and on *Alcander* himſelf, when forgiven his offence, we are not to wonder at that ſaying, "And I, if I be lifted up, *will* "*draw all men unto me.*" It was ſpoken from a thorough knowledge of human nature, no leſs than the irreverſible purpoſe of his own mind.

ſalvation, however deeply he may have plunged himſelf in guilt, are glad tidings, extorting that exclamation, "LORD, what is man! that "thou ſo regardeſt him?" Theſe things are calculated to put all the powers of the ſoul into motion, becauſe they are infinitely grand, intereſting, and deſirable.

But ſhould there be no ſpark of ingenuity in our breaſt, to kindle at ſuch an object as a compaſſionate, dying, crucified Redeemer, and the unſearchable riches of his grace; ſhould nothing but fear and terror be able to awaken and alarm; what will you name equal to the ſecond appearance of this rejected, deſpiſed, injured Lamb of GOD, as it was preſented in viſion to his beloved diſciple?

"I ſaw," he ſays, "a great white throne, "and Him that ſat on it; before whoſe face "the earth and the heaven fled away, and "there was no place found for them. And "I ſaw the dead, ſmall and great, ſtand be-"fore GOD; and the books were opened, "and another book was opened, which is "the book of life; and the dead were judged "out of thoſe things which were written in "the books, according to their works. And "the ſea gave up the dead which were in it;

" and death and hell delivered up the dead " which were in them ; and they were judged " every man according to their works," *Rev.* xx.

Then (in the words of a ſpirited writer) " the intemperate gratifications of corrupt " men, their impure indulgences, the ruin " of the innocence, peace, and uſefulneſs of " thoſe whom they have made ſubſervient to " their pleaſure, ambition, and avarice, ſhall " be recalled to their remembrance ; ſhall " appear in all their dreadful circumſtances " of aggravation, and receive from the Judge " the due recompence of divine vengeance. " *Then* neither titles of honor, poſſeſſions, " family connections, nor any advantages " they can here boaſt, ſhall avail in the leaſt " to ward off the ſentence of the impartial " Judge, or ſhelter them from the ſtroke of " that almighty arm, which ſhall be lifted up " againſt them. *Then* the eternal conſequences " of divine anger ſhall purſue their crimes. " The Redeemer Himſelf ſhall pronounce " them *accurſed*. Heaven ſhall reject, and " for ever cloſe its gates againſt them. They " ſhall be forſaken of GOD, ſhunned by his " holy angels, avoided by all the wiſe, the " religious,

" religious, the recovered part of mankind, as
" contagion itſelf, and marked out as veſſels
" of wrath, endured with much long-ſuffer-
" ing, and fitted for deſtruction. *Then* that
" faith, piety and virtue, which they wickedly
" deſpiſed, ſhall appear to be the only diſ-
" tinctions of mankind, which GOD regards,
" and the ſole qualifications for eternal hap-
" pineſs.—*Then* the followers of CHRIST in
" all the excellencies of the Chriſtian life and
" character, ſhall be owned as the only genuine
" children of wiſdom; ſhall obtain the ap-
" probation of heaven and earth, and be ac-
" counted worthy through the all-powerful
" merits and interceſſion of CHRIST, to ob-
" tain eternal life and glory."

There can be no greater miſtake, therefore, if we really mean to promote the practice of good works, than to omit, or but ſlightly mention ſuch ſubjects as theſe, in order to lecture upon ſome ſingle duty, recommending it as amiable and excellent, or painting the conduct oppoſite to it, as baſe and hurtful. *Theſe ſubjects*, either to gain attention, or rouſe the ſoul to action, compared with the Fall, the Redemption, the Eternal Judgment, are weak as the ſound of a whiſper to the trump of GOD.

This miſtake is *injurious* alſo to the practice of good works in another way, although it expreſſes ſo much zeal for them. The chief hindrance to a good life, is pride of heart, which ſets us above regarding the known dictates of any ſuperior, and the affectionate counſel even of our beſt friend; whilſt it leads us extravagantly to over-rate the leaſt degree of obedience we find ourſelves inclined to pay; and renders us moſt of all averſe to confeſs our deſerts, and our debt to God for his mercies. From men it makes us expect much, and ready to take offence if it is not paid us to the full meaſure of what we imagine to be our due. Wherefore, till this inbred worſt diſtemper of the mind is ſubdued, there can be *no ſucceſs* in preſſing the obſervance of duty. But in order to put men out of conceit with themſelves, the moſt effectual way is not to prove the reaſonableneſs, excellency, or neceſſity of good works, or the iniquity of this or that particular vice. This will have little effect in compariſon of a direct attack upon human pride, by ſtrong proofs from ſcripture and matter of fact, that ſo far from having any reaſon to think well of ourſelves, every individual, till renewed in the ſpirit of his mind, is a deſpiſer of the authority

rity and excellency of GOD; a vile ingrate towards Him; an oppoſer of his government; — conſequently a compound of qualities ſo odious, that no one upon earth was ever abandoned enough to ſpeak a word in their defence. It is *all* this heavy charge of guilt and depravity, brought home to the conſcience, not *ſome* particular inſtance of diſobedience, which confounds the pride, or fires the reſentment of ſinners, — which provokes them to contradict and blaſpheme the ſcripture-doctrine, or ſtops their mouth, exciting in them earneſt prayer for deliverance from ſuch a ſtate of wickedneſs. Only keep out of ſight the *whole* of our vileneſs, and we can eaſily bear reproach of conſcience for being guilty in many things:—but when this is proved to our conviction, there can be no peace till we become Chriſtians altogether.

Further; By dwelling *only* on plain, practical ſubjects, we neceſſarily confine mens attention to particular duties, inſtead of laying before them the ſpiritual Law of GOD, and its demands; by which omiſſion, ſelf-complacency is flattered in thoſe who obſerve the ſingle duty we preſs upon them, or are free from the particular vice we condemn;

and thus ſlaves to ſin of every denomination, find in turn ſomething to make them eaſy, or give them pleaſure. Prove the neceſſity of temperance and chaſtity, many of a vile covetous ſpirit, will think themſelves ſufficiently virtuous, becauſe they are neither drunken nor lewd. Dwell on the neceſſity of juſtice and integrity in all our dealings, many of the vain and proud, of the intemperate or debauched, will bleſs themſelves, that they are very honeſt men. Expoſe faſhionable vices, thoſe who have eſcaped them through mere prudence, not any ſenſe of duty to God, will conclude their ſtate is ſafe and good. Exhort to the diligent practice of devotion, and proud formaliſts will truſt ſtill more in a round of religious duties, and deſpiſe others. In ſhort, *all* will retain their original good opinion of themſelves, becauſe, though condemned in ſome reſpects, their neighbors are ſo too; no one lives without faults, and they, as well as others, have their virtues *.

But

* Every body has heard of Him, who made no other uſe of the Whole Duty of Man, than to point out the faults of his neighbors, by affixing their names in the margin, oppoſite to the vice the author condemns. This is done much oftener in the heart, than is commonly ſuppoſed, when particular branches of duty are enlarged on, without ſome check upon our natural ſpirit of ſelf-preference.

But no room is left for this falſe concluſion; nothing to feed vanity of mind, on account of freedom from this or that particular vice, or the practice of this or that virtue, when *Chriſtian doctrines* are urged to enforce good works. Since from theſe doctrines it is a truth indiſputable, that in our firſt eſtate we are all vile and loſt,—all concluded under ſin; and are delivered out of it (if indeed delivered) "not by works of righteouſneſs "which we have done," but by mere mercy, through the atonement and righteouſneſs of GOD our Savior; and after deliverance from it, can never ſay with truth, we are accepted for our own goodneſs. Self-complacency, therefore, the great hindrance to proficiency in obedience, is mortified by theſe conſiderations to the laſt hour of life, even in the midſt of the moſt active zeal to honor GOD, and manifeſt good-will to all men.

Should it be ſaid, Care may certainly be taken, ſo to preſs obedience without partiality, and without hypocriſy, as to prevent every abuſe, and all ſelf-exaltation. — I anſwer, if Chriſtian doctrines be omitted, one capital defect muſt ſtill remain, which will always prevent ſucceſs; becauſe no proof of the excellency or neceſſity of good works, independent

pendent of Chriſtian principles, however guarded, can give men the *encouragement* they need, or direct them how to obtain *power* to do their duty. Little indeed is known of our condition, by thoſe who think we want to be told, our life and practice ought to be very different from what it is. Supreme love to God, and good behavior to every one, all allow is our bounden duty. But unbelief, pride, ſelf-love, deſire of gain, preferment, and diſtinction; love of praiſe, with the ſtrong impulſe of ſenſual appetites, make this confeſſion affect us very ſlightly, and prove an effectual obſtruction in the way of our duty. Hence the contrary ſpirit, to that of love either to God or man, hath ruled the human ſpecies ever ſince the fall, when left to themſelves, not from ignorance that it is evil, but from want of a determined will to cleave to that which is good. Find out a way, therefore, to dethrone theſe tyrant-paſſions, good works will follow of courſe. "When thou "haſt ſet my heart at liberty, I will run the "way of thy commandments." On the contrary, to preſs the neceſſity of moral practice, without firſt giving plain and full directions how to maſter theſe grand impediments to well-

doing,

doing, is no better than reading our ſentence of condemnation. What we all want, is power to ſurmount the difficulties we have to contend with, and aſſurance of its vouchſafement; not taken for granted, but eſtabliſhed upon ſtrong foundations, ſufficient to remove natural diſtruſt, and painful doubts about this matter. Was not ſuch aſſurance abſolutely neceſſary to ſecure the practice of good works, why are promiſes of aid, ſupport, conſolation, and final victory, given and repeated ſo often, ſo ſolemnly to the faithful? Why is there any thing more in the Bible than a clear definition of our duty, and revelation of a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhment? But no ſuch aſſurance of power, ariſes from the ſtrongeſt proof of the excellency or neceſſity of good works. Till the Chriſtian doctrine of the ſucceſs of faith in CHRIST, his love, the power of the holy Ghoſt, and the engagements of the new Covenant, are proved, explained, and applied, the rule of duty, excellent as it is, will not be found practicable by us. To the command of GOD, there muſt be added his kind exhortations, and endearing promiſes. We muſt be aſſured, "He "giveth power to the faint, and to them that

"have

" have no might, He increaſeth ſtrength:
" is nigh unto all them that call upon Him,
" and will fulfil the deſire of them that fear
" Him." An advocate for ſinners muſt be ſet before us in ſuch a captivating point of view, as the apoſtle deſcribes him to the church, to inſpire hope, that our petitions will certainly proſper: " Seeing then we
" have a great high prieſt, that is paſſed into
" the heavens, JESUS, the Son of GOD; let
" us hold faſt our profeſſion. For we have
" not an high prieſt which cannot be touched
" with a feeling of our infirmities; but was
" in all points tempted like as we are, yet
" without ſin. Let us, therefore, come *boldly*
" to the throne of grace, that we may obtain
" mercy, and find grace to help in time of
" need," *Heb.* iv.

When theſe arguments and motives are preſſed, not only is ſupport given to the weak, and comfort to the dejected; but every worker of iniquity is ſelf-condemned, and left abſolutely without excuſe, for not calling on the ſame LORD over all, " who is rich in mercy
" to all that call on him: for whoſoever call-
" eth on the name of the LORD, ſhall be
" ſaved."

Such

Such proclamations of help and power from above, are not only neceſſary for all, as motives and arguments to abound in the practice of good works, but *more evidently* ſtill in their caſe, who have been long *accuſtomed* to do evil, and made themſelves tenfold more the children of hell, than they were before. Perſons of this black character, oftener than is commonly ſuppoſed, deſpair of ever being better. Their long-indulged paſſions, ſtronger than iron fetters, bind them in the houſe of their priſon. They are falling victims to love of liquor, or vile lewdneſs, though temporal ruin and death ſtare them in the face. Led captive, and borne down by impetuous paſſions, in vain withſtood in their own ſtrength, how do tradeſmen lie and defraud; the poor ſteal and pilfer; the covetous oppreſs, the paſſionate quarrel, and men in general vex and devour one another! Out of this multitude ſome are recovered: their life, their mind is changed. But this marvellous transformation is always brought about in a way which clearly proves, that much more than the knowledge of our duty, is neceſſary to make us perform it. Such converts to CHRIST and righteouſneſs, are

are firſt heavy laden with their ſins, and ſo grievouſly feel their own inability to caſt away their tranſgreſſions, that they cry unto the LORD day and night for mercy and for power. Their ſtate is drawn to the life in thoſe remarkable words: "When the poor "and needy ſeek for water, and there is none, "and their tongue faileth for thirſt. Then "the LORD ſaith, I will hear them, I the "GOD of *Iſrael* will not forſake them," *Iſai.* xlvii. 17.

From hence we may account for a very ſurpriſing fact; I mean, that ſome of the moſt profligate on earth, during great part of their lives, far exceed afterwards in the excellency of their practice, and the good example they ſet, even many who have ſerved the LORD from their youth up. The reaſon is, their own helpleſsneſs and miſery have been more deeply felt; their prayers for deliverance, and ſome ſuitable return for ſuch mercy, more fervent and perſevering; their ſalvation is aſtoniſhing to themſelves, and their ſenſibility of that adorable grace, to which they owe it all, quick and permanent.

This

This change, evident in the moſt extraordinary converts through every age of the church, fully proves, that the moſt effectual way to promote good works, is *not* only or principally to ſhow they are excellent or neceſſary; but on the contrary, to fix *conviction* on the unbelieving and impenitent, that they *are as wicked and baſe*, as the word of GOD affirms them to be; as much *need* his power to help them, and importunate prayer for it, as the ſcripture teaches; and may be abſolutely certain, that when they implore pardon and ſtrength, in and through CHRIST, they ſhall be ſaved. The very worſt of men in this way, and in no other, have been converted, made wiſe, and juſt, and good, and holy; — whilſt the moſt decent and regular, by denying their own weakneſs and guilt; by preſuming they needed no deep humiliation for ſin, or cleanſing in the fountain opened for it, go on till death, ſelf-exalted, unchanged, unforgiven. In one caſe, we ſee, in the ſtrongeſt light, excellent fruit from deep conviction of ſinfulneſs and helpleſsneſs: in the other, a fair exterior, and regular deportment, prove the greateſt hindrance to ſelf-knowledge, to faith in CHRIST, to real

prayer,

prayer, and abounding in every good work. In both the truth of ſcripture appears, that "PRIDE always goes before deſtruction;" and before honor in the ſight of GOD, humility.

When this neglect of Chriſtian doctrines, pregnant with ſo many evils, has been juſtly condemned and cenſured, the general reply from thoſe who allow they are intelligible by the poor, is, that we ought in charity to take it for granted theſe doctrines are known and believed; — and for this reaſon there is no occaſion to *teach them conſtantly*.

What! take it for granted, againſt the evidence of our ſenſes, and daily obſervation? Take it for granted, when the very means of Chriſtian inſtruction are ſo notoriouſly neglected, and even deſpiſed? Do the poor know and believe any of the Articles of the Chriſtian Creed, when almoſt without exception they plead their condition in excuſe for the groſſeſt ignorance, with no leſs confidence, than if GOD had declared, He would allow the plea? Do men engroſſed in following their trade, their farms, and their merchandize, underſtand and believe theſe doctrines, without the leaſt application to their Bible,

or

Bible, or fervent prayer, or feeling of the infinite importance of things ſpiritual and unſeen? Can ſchoolmaſters, if religiouſly diſpoſed themſelves, do more in general than hear their ſcholars repeat the Catechiſm by rote, which may be done in perfect ignorance of *all* it means? Or in univerſities, is Chriſtian religion the ſcience which ſtudents are called upon in any degree to regard?

Unleſs, therefore, the Pulpit is employed conſtantly to ſupply the guilty neglect of the vaſt multitudes of parents ignorant and profane in educating their children, and the deplorable defects of ſchools and colleges, it ſeems hardly poſſible, humanly ſpeaking, that we ſhould be more than nominal Chriſtians; ſo far from diſcerning the excellency and end of the faith and hope of the Goſpel, as not even to know what they mean; be perfectly ſatisfied with ourſelves if we do no harm; and think we are Chriſtians to all intents and purpoſes, if we are but good members of ſociety.

Let us now ſum up the ſeveral evil effects which have been proved natural conſequences of dwelling on the practice of good works,

in neglect of Christian doctrines. It makes the most important part of the Bible appear of little use; contradicts the judgment of CHRIST and his Apostles; and their express command to teach these sacred truths. It defeats one great end of the Christian ministry, which is, to expound the scripture; leads men into such unscriptural notions, as makes them first to dislike, and at last reject the Bible. It keeps out of sight the most efficacious motives to abound in good works; gratifies pride, excites to odious comparisons, and passes over in silence those beneficent proclamations of help and power from above, without which no man is sufficient to walk in obedience before GOD.

In answer to this charge, I am sensible, some will reply,—not less evil, as history attests, are the consequences of insisting continually on Grace, the precious promises, and Covenant, the righteousness and merits of CHRIST, and other comfortable doctrines. Have they not created in wicked men a detestable presumption of being saved? Have they not been so taught, as to inspire even a contempt for good works, and make every social virtue appear a low attainment; and earnest seeking

to

to keep the commandments, a thing derogatory to the glory of *free grace*, by which we are accepted in the Beloved? What can be more pernicious than these effects?

It is granted, one extreme is no *less fatal* than the other. It is granted, moral practice must be urged, and insisted on with all authority, in its proper place and connection, no less than the articles of faith. Nothing but Antinomian phrenzy ever can lead men to be shy of allowing, of earnestly contending for this. But the important point of difference between the world and the church of CHRIST, lies *in the means* which are to be used to secure the practice of good works, and their value when performed. Pagan philosophers, mere moralists, and those who think with them, will have the fruit without the tree; good practice without Christian principles, from mere resolution of mind, from approbation of virtue, and determined purpose to attain future happiness. The universal church hath always taught, that knowledge of CHRIST, love of his name, and the power of the holy Ghost, are previously requisite, before we can lead a Christian life; that these things must be proved, explained, applied

applied, as moſt efficacious to win over the alienated heart to delight in GOD, and regulate the whole man according to his will. On this foundation, the whole building of Chriſtian graces is to riſe, to the comfort of the believer, the benefit of all in connection with him, and the glory of GOD. The ſacred Oracles teach us, knowledge muſt go before faith;—conviction of impending ruin for ſin, and deliverance from it, before ſupreme love to CHRIST, without which there can be no humble univerſal obedience, or good works well-pleaſing in the ſight of GOD.

From theſe teſtimonies the concluſion cannot be invalidated, that the great eſſential doctrines which miniſters are conſtantly to teach, muſt be the very ſame as were taught by the Apoſtles themſelves, under the immediate inſpiration of the Spirit of truth, when they firſt publiſhed the Goſpel to the world, and laid the foundation of the Chriſtian church; not ſuch as moral philoſophers, or thoſe who think with them, inſiſt on, to the great diſparagement of the faith and hope of the Goſpel.

FINIS.